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# United States Army Recruiting Command

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### TOTAL MARKETING: A STUDY OF IMAGE

BY

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AND  
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AUGUST 1990

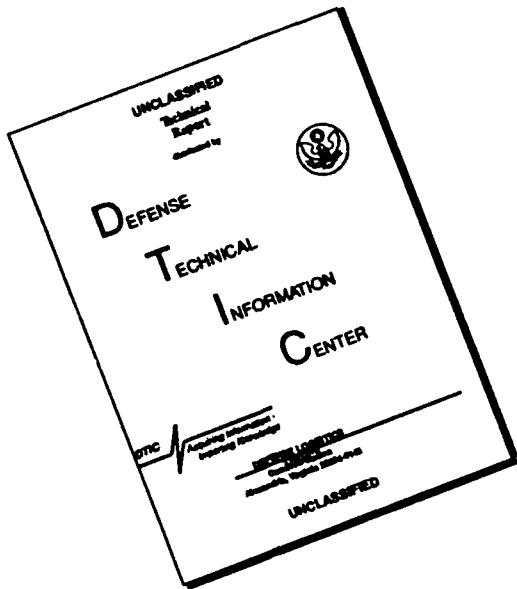
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A STUDY OF IMAGE

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## I. INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

This report is the result of a study to examine the impact of USAREC efforts to develop a positive Army image. As indicated in the Statement of Tasks, the study sought to analyze the total marketing efforts and how each part of the marketing efforts enhances or detracts from the overall image. In particular, the study focused on how potential and actual recruits experience the recruiting process and how the symbols they encounter affect them in addition to or beyond media advertising. The study used qualitative research methods.

The project grew out of the recognition of two main issues: (1) the impact of total marketing on Army image, and (2) the need for qualitative research methods to determine how the Army is perceived.

### A. The Total Marketing Concept

Total marketing acknowledges that all actions of an organization in pursuing its goals are potentially influential in affecting the responses of its audience. Each element is part of the entire set of communications being put forth by the organization. Although this is not a new idea, it needs constant refreshment. Awareness of it comes to the fore every so often, as new examples reinforce the idea. An article in a recent issue of the Wall Street Journal pointed to subtle differences between the logos, decors, and employees' clothing at Wal-Mart and K-Mart stores. Noting Wal-Mart's greater success, the article said, "Everything a company does sends a signal about who they are, what they believe, and what they want to be; one little bad thing can wipe out lots of good things."

Similarly, the USAREC Statement of Tasks points out that the cultivation of image in USAREC is researched and managed as part of the national advertising effort, but had not been studied as part of the Army's total marketing effort. "Youth entering the Army recruiting environment, however, are impacted (literally barraged) by a host of new symbols that build their image of the Army...including the recruiting station, the building, its location, sign on front, furniture inside, the noise inside, the recruiters, their appearance, presentation, the cars they drive, on and on."

### B. The Need for Qualitative Research Methods

Conventional survey methods, such as those used in The 1987 New Recruit Survey (NRS), provide much information, but they result in summary tables that do not go below the surface of the facts being reported. In order to gain a rich and penetrating understanding of how young people perceive the Army and the prospect of enlistment, and to learn how the process of recruitment is experienced, qualitative research methods were used in this study. These are approaches and techniques that observe the respondents and enable them to express themselves in greater detail. Qualitative methods include focus groups, individual interviews, projective techniques, and case studies.

### C. The General Plan

The rationale of the study was to inquire into the recruiting process at different stages. The data-gathering plan that was followed was designed to track the process by interviewing young men and women with varying degrees of exposure to and awareness of the recruiting process. At the outset, Dr. Calder and Dr. Levy visited recruiting stations and a MEPS in order to become acquainted with these environments. Then the field data were gathered. The first set of interviews included three focus groups and 50 individual interviews. These interviews were with high school seniors who, in most cases, had no contact with the Army recruiting process. All interviewees were average students and expected to graduate from high school. The later stages included 75 individual interviews and three group interviews with men and women who were in process of recruitment or had completed the process and were going to be shipped out. A small subgroup included people who had not enlisted, either because they had been rejected or had declined acceptance.

This procedure enabled the study to track the development of the image of the Army as it takes shape both from advertising (not to study that per se, but to take that as a benchmark) and from the actual experience of being recruited.

The respondents were interviewed in both the Chicago and Milwaukee areas. Table 1 indicates the plan of the study. Two interviewers' guides and discussion outlines were used in the interviews and focus group discussions. These are shown in the Appendix.

Table 1. The Plan of the Study

	<u>Pre-Visit</u>	<u>Post-Visit</u>
Focus Groups	3 (Calder)	3 (Calder)
Observations		Calder and Levy
On-site Interviews		25 (Levy)
Individual Interviews	50 (Levy)	50 (Levy)

### Sample Descriptions

In the pre-recruiting phase individual interviews, all respondents were high school seniors. Of these, 35 were male and 15 female. They came from six Illinois and five Wisconsin communities in the Chicago and Milwaukee metropolitan areas, respectively, with 31 from Illinois and 19 from Wisconsin. They were selected directly from their communities via screening phone calls made randomly to homes in the areas.

The sample of respondents who were interviewed during and after their experience in the recruiting process were provided by the two MEPS stations. A

description of that sample appears in table 2.

Table 2. Sample Description (N=75)

<u>Age</u>		<u>Sex</u>		<u>Ethnicity</u>		<u>Education</u>		<u>Family Income</u>	
17-18	28	Male	58	White	55	Non H.S. grad.	15	-\$24,999	15
19-20	20	Female	17	Black	15	H.S. grad.	42	25-44,999	39
21+	27			Hispanic	4	13 yrs.+	18	45+	16
				Asian	1			D.K.	5

The same basic interview approach was used with all of the respondents. In addition to conversational questions about their plans and feelings, they were asked various projective questions concerning the Army and the recruiting process. They were asked to imagine what it would be like to be in the Army, what the recruiting stations and the recruiting process were like (or are probably like if they had not actually experienced one), to relate a dream about the Army, to tell a story about a picture of Army personnel, to select the kinds of animals the Army might be like and to explain why. These questions served to elicit respondents' fantasies, to move beyond simple descriptions, and thus provide further information about respondents' opinions, beliefs, expectations, and perceptions.

The focus group interviews ranged in size from six to 12 people. In the pre-recruiting phase, the sample consisted of male and female high school students. Two groups were drawn from the Chicago area, one from Milwaukee. The post-recruiting groups were provided by MEPS stations: two groups from the Milwaukee MEPS and one from the Chicago MEPS.

## II. SUMMARY OF RESULTS

The pre-recruitment group see the Army as follows:

1. The Army is not a realistic alternative in the minds of those who expect to go to college after high school. Decision making in these individuals is dominated by a frame of reference that emphasizes college attendance.

2. The Army also does not come readily to mind among those who are intent on getting a job and believe they can do so.

3. The Army seems more feasible as a choice among people with (a) family military traditions, (b) more intense patriotic attitudes, (c) uncertain goals and self-discipline, (d) the desire for training and/or fringe benefits of an educational nature, and (e) identification with its aggressive symbolism.

4. Perceptions of the Army are ambivalent. In positive terms, it has the image of an opportunity for camaraderie, self-expression, self-development, and other rewards, a chance to be an admired GI Joe. Negatively, it is threatening as low-level, impersonal, anonymous, dangerous, contrary to individuality.

5. The recruitment process is seen in generally muted affirmative terms. The recruiting personnel are respected, even if seeming somewhat cut from a mold. The recruiting environment is seen to range from vaguely nice to relatively dreary, with an atmosphere that is antiseptic, impersonal, business-like, and possibly cold and intimidating.

6. Members of the group were familiar with Army advertising, highly aware of the themes relating to "Be All That You Can Be," college benefits, and training specializations. The recruiting process is imagined as less interesting and exciting in itself, although the advertising had led them to expect a business-like attempt to learn about the individual in order to make an appropriate selection and placement.

\* \* \* \*

The recruits in process are generally similar to the pre-recruits in their perceptions of what the Army has to offer, with some variations in their tone and awareness. For this group:

1. The Army is being actively considered as a possible career or as an avenue to school, training, and other kinds of self-improvement.

2. The recruits are more detailed and affirmative in seeing the potential benefits of the Army. Although the content of their ideas about experiences in the Army are conventional, they have more positive fantasies about what being in the Army will be like and what they will get out of it.

3. The recruiting process is not unlike what the pre-recruits expect it to be, but the recruits are more accepting of it. To a greater extent, they find the recruiting stations places of security and reassurance, even homey or cozy. They

like to feel the recruiters are friendly people who deal with them in a direct and straightforward way, who do not put them down, and that they are seeking to find a mutually satisfactory outcome. Some do feel pressure from the recruiters, but more generally, they deny that, and at times they are surprised that the recruiters and counselors are not more pressing, but behave so judiciously in working out individual placements.

4. Compared to the small local recruiting stations, the MEPS seems more bureaucratic and military in its orderliness, organization, and waiting aspects, which, while not surprising, tends to reduce the glamorous side of the vision of the Army.

\* \* \* \*

The enlisted group is similar to the group in process in their general views of the recruiting process, its physical qualities, procedures, and personnel.

1. Having completed the process, the group shows even more favorable attitudes and positive evaluations. Being able to identify with the experience of being in the Army is crucial to this.

2. They praise the Army and what it has to offer. Advertising reinforces this.

3. They see the furnishings and decor of recruiting stations in terms of being comfortable, making them feel relaxed and at home.

4. The MEPS is a larger, more impersonal office; it is focused on processing more people, therefore less focused on the individual. It seems slow, boring, with too much paperwork and extended examinations, making a long day. But excuses are made for that as being natural, and surprise is expressed that the MEPS is as bright and comfortable as it is.

5. The shippers are intent on the deal they have made, sometimes wary about it, but eager to get at it.

6. They are especially favorable toward the recruiters, repeatedly expressing gratitude for their interest, conscientiousness, and honesty. Their emphasis on honesty, on not being pressured, and on being treated as a person shows anxiety about these matters, and the hope that the Army will be reliable.

\* \* \* \*

The nonenlistees are somewhat disaffected; and see the Army as having frustrated them in their aims. They highlight the firing-line position of the recruiters by tending to blame them for being either insincere or trying too hard to switch the recruit to a less desirable position.

### III. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

#### A. Total Marketing Communications Model

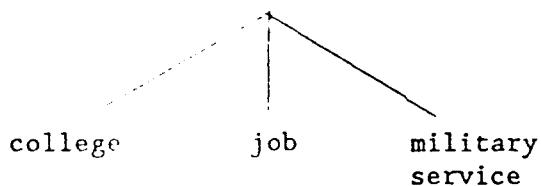
The detailed findings of this study are presented in the next section of this report. In this section we present a conceptual model based on the findings. The model views enlistment as a continuum of experiences and perceptions over an extended period of time. At each point along the way, there are varied communications affecting potential and actual recruits.

Based on our findings, enlistment is best conceptualized as a three-stage process. Each stage results in an implicit Yes/No decision to enter the next stage. Enlistment is the product of moving through all three stages (see figure 1 on next page).

##### 1. Consideration Stage

Early on, potential recruits seek to define their choices for life after high school. Their time horizon is long; they do not take a short-run view. Most important in shaping this definition is communication from their family/friends and their school. This communication is heavily weighted toward attending college. The expectation communicated is that a person (of the type focused on in this research) should attend college if at all possible as a matter of economic necessity.

The choice is not framed as a decision among comparable alternatives. The decision tree is not:



Getting a job is not seen as a viable alternative. The military is not seen as an alternative to college.

The decision tree is, in fact, sequential:

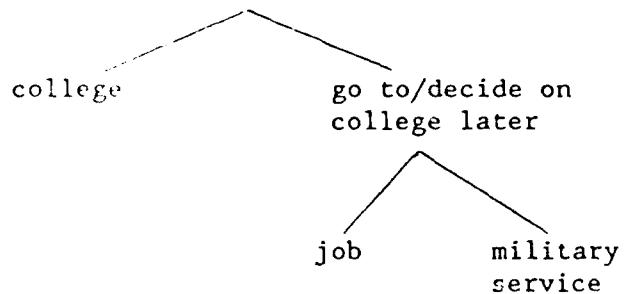
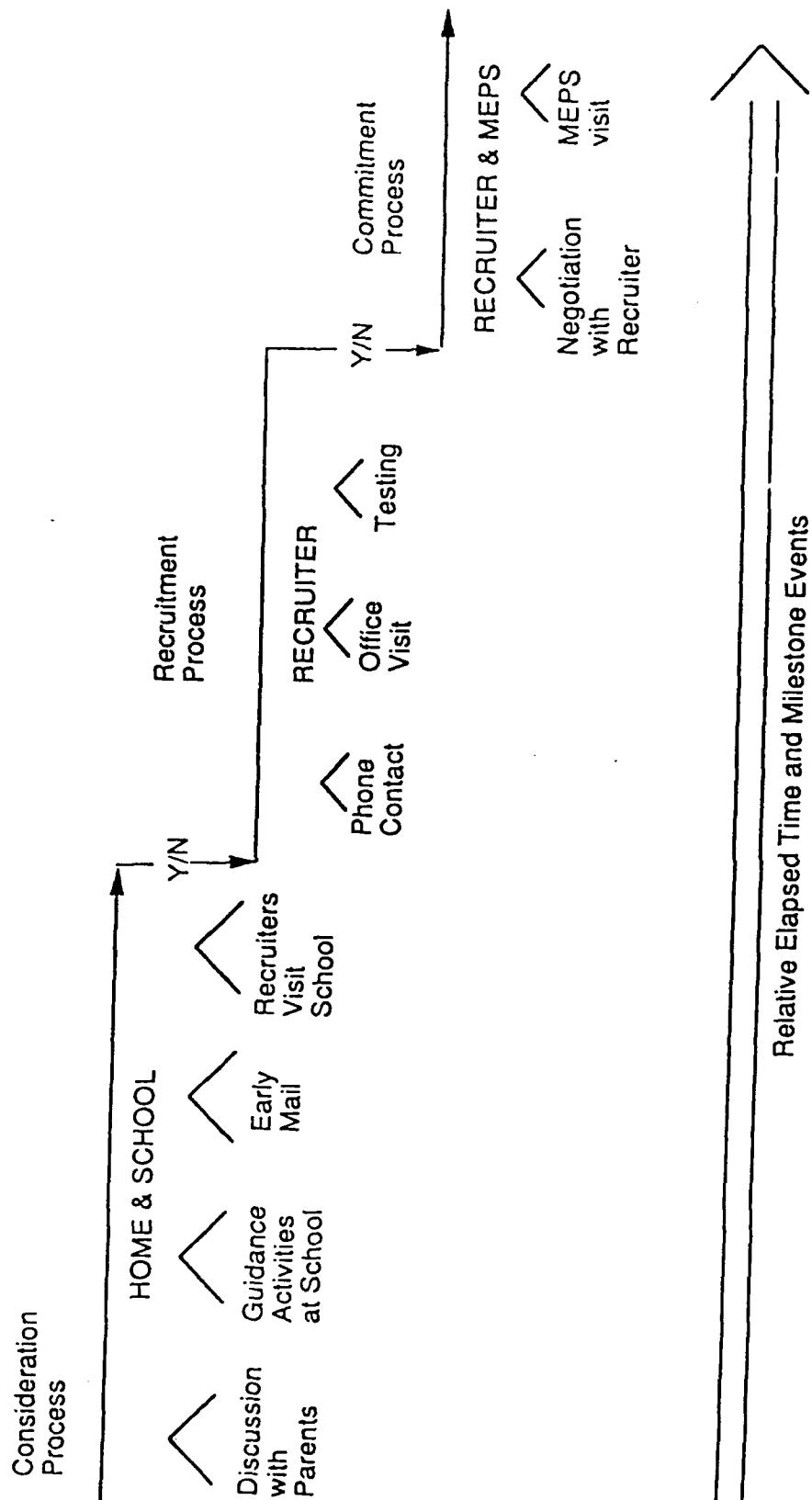


Figure 1. Total Marketing Communications Model for Army Enlistment



The first decision revolves around going to college immediately. Both home and school hold this up as the preferred choice. Some people cannot go to college, however. Usually this is for financial reasons, but it can be for more personal reasons, the main one being that the individual dislikes school.

The alternative to going to college is to postpone college. This may involve a specific intent to attend later or a vaguer notion of keeping options open. Once this decision is reached, consideration is between a job and the military. The job alternative is very unattractive. Available jobs are viewed as dead ends.

The military alternative has distinct advantages and disadvantages. On the plus side it is a way of earning money for college and possibly gaining relevant experience. It also has an image of vitality and adventure. On the negative side, it is a long and irreversible commitment. Moreover, one can not be sure that the experience will be positive. It is hard to tell what the military will be like and it seems a very different life from college. This reluctance is greatly eased if the person has close ties to people who have had military experience.

The net result of the consideration stage is that potential recruits are pushed toward college if this is at all possible. Otherwise, they are led to consider the military as a way of keeping their college option open and gaining experience.

## 2. Recruitment Stage

Potential recruits approach military service as a way of going to or at least deciding on college later. (The person who has a specific interest in a military career/occupation is the exception.) In the recruitment stage they realize they are either not going or are going to have difficulty in going to college.

The key communication in this stage is with recruiters. People look to develop a relationship with the recruiter. This relationship is a way of experiencing what the military is like. The recruiter is also the only person who can tell what a service has to offer. Most crucially, the recruiter can explain how the service can be used for college.

The choice of services depends heavily on the recruiter the person forms the closest relationship with. If the person has an interest in technical fields, this creates a bias toward the Air Force and Navy. Otherwise, the critical factor is the relationship and, closely connected, the perception that the service offers the best college/training deal.

The key contact of the recruitment stage is the recruiting office visit. A relationship is fostered if the potential recruit feels comfortable and is not intimidated by the recruiter's behavior and office surroundings.

### 3. Commitment Stage

Once potential recruits have established a relationship with a particular recruiter, they are ready to seriously consider enlisting. In the consideration stage, military service has most likely seemed strange; in the recruitment stage, the decision seems unreal. In the commitment stage, military life and the decision to join starts to become real.

The recruiter is again crucial to this stage. Just by talking and serving as a model of military life, the recruiter can encourage commitment. Beyond this, supplying concrete details about college and training are most crucial. Recruits generally are not looking for any one specific training opportunity so much as specific information about the training and its general long-term relevance.

The MEPS experience is also important at this stage. By deflating somewhat the military's vitality/adventure image, it serves to make service more real (see figure 2 on next page).

## B. General Analysis of Recruiting Efforts

The model developed from this research can be used to analyze current recruiting efforts directed at higher achievement high school graduates. For this purpose, these efforts can be divided into three basic components:

- o Recruiter contact activities
- o Direct marketing materials and promotional incentives
- o Media advertising

The key insight supplied by the model is that these efforts need to be considered relative to each stage in the recruiting process. It is not possible to evaluate advertising, for instance, in absolute terms. Rather, advertising must be considered in terms of its impact on a specific stage of the recruiting process.

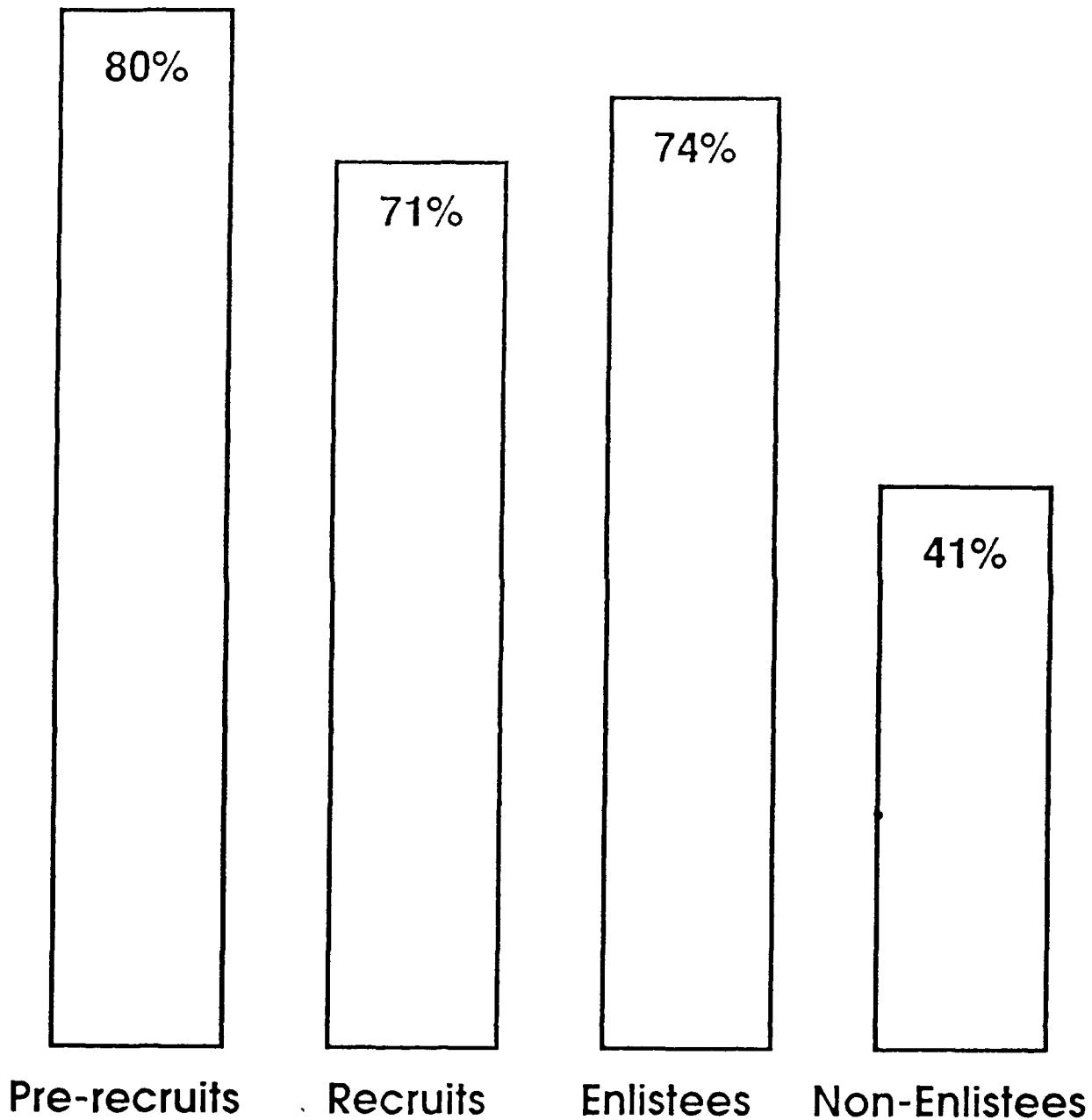
### 1. Consideration Stage

In this stage, potential recruits become aware of the necessity of thinking about life after high school and the choices available to them. They go on to frame the decision they face as described above--as college versus postponing college. If postponement is necessary, they may then decide to seriously consider the military.

Recruiter contact activities, direct marketing, and advertising are all successful in creating an initial awareness of the military. Potential recruits see recruiters at their schools, they receive brochures, they notice advertising more. These efforts build an initial awareness. They are, however, problematic in two respects.

- a. Even early on, the message is not simply that the military is an option. It is that the military is "trying to recruit you." This implies

Figure 2. Vitality Index (percentage of wild animals chosen to characterize the Army)



that service is not necessarily a first-choice activity. It thus reinforces the college decision frame provided by home and school.

b. Beyond initial awareness, recruiting efforts become more problematic as the consideration stage unfolds.

- o Recruiters are viewed as using pressure tactics. This elicits avoidance behavior on the part of potential recruits, creating a cycle of pressure-avoidance. Recruiters implicitly seem to justify the college decision frame.
- o Direct mail marketing is impressive at first but soon wears out. It does not seem to provide new information.
- o Advertising, to the extent that it speaks to college and training, is seen as relevant. But in portraying the high vitality/adventure image, it tends to make the military seem a less-natural choice given the college frame of reference.

On balance, this analysis suggests that in the consideration stage, despite the creation of initial awareness, current recruiting efforts net out as:

Recruiter Contact	- Negative
Advertising	- Neutral
Direct Marketing	- Neutral

## 2. Recruitment Stage

In this stage potential recruits seek to form a relationship with a recruiter and to obtain specific college and training information. This leads them to focus on a particular service.

- o Recruiters in general do a good job in building relationships (once the person has moved beyond the consideration stage). Recruiting office visits are handled well. Potential recruits are made to feel comfortable.
- o Direct mail is not considered useful. It does not seem to reflect the fact that the person is seriously considering the military. Promotional incentives seem to trivialize this seriousness.
- o Advertising is on balance a positive influence at this stage. The recruiting process both supports and detracts from this imagery, however. (Because of its importance, this issue will be explored in more detail in the next section of this report.)

On balance, this analysis suggests that in the recruitment stage, current efforts net out as:

Recruiter Contact - Positive  
Advertising - Positive  
Direct Marketing - Negative

### 3. Commitment Stage

In this stage potential recruits are looking to bridge the gap between their experience and military life. This takes place on two levels. One is in attempting to anticipate and visualize what it is like to be in the service. The other is in focusing on the concrete details of college funding and training.

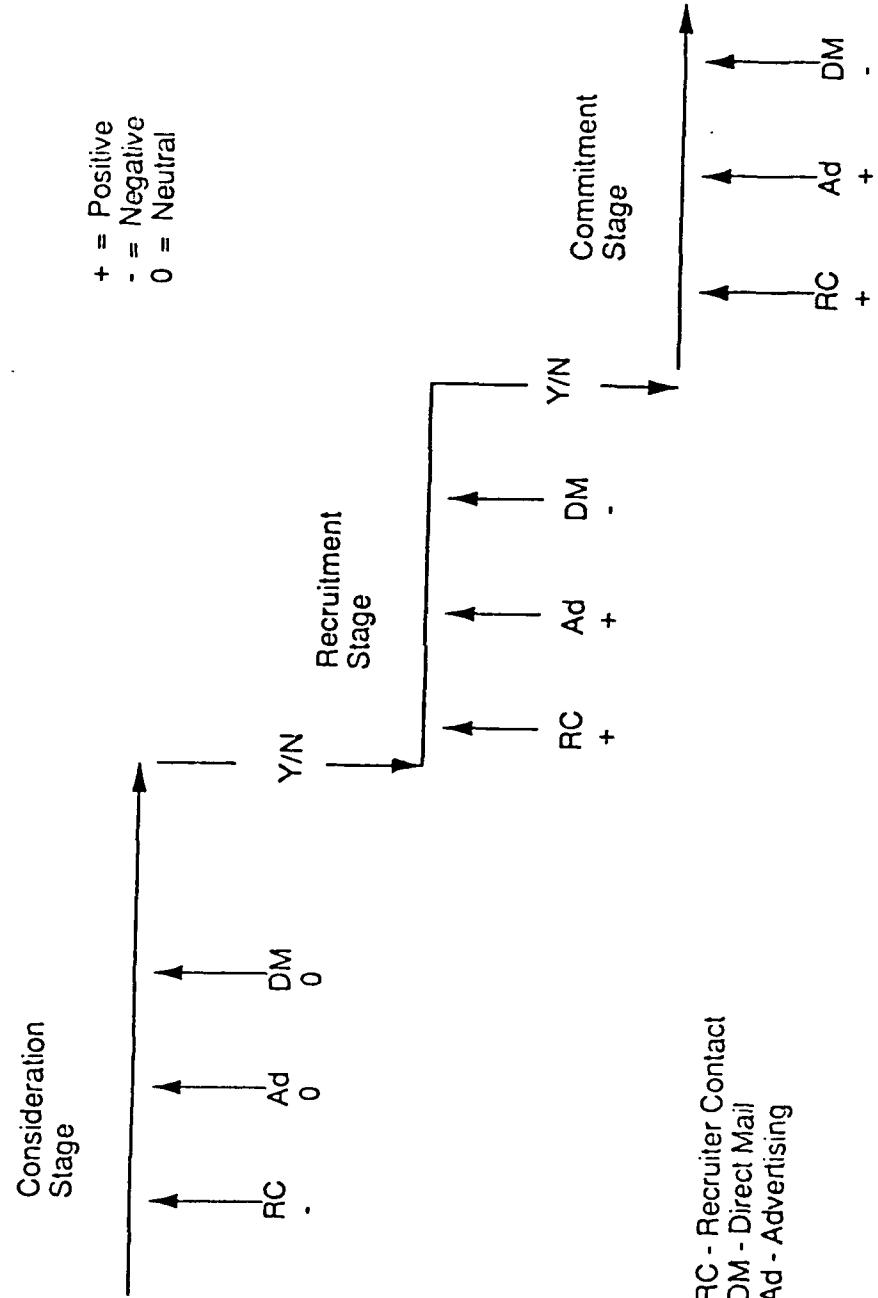
- o Recruiters are naturally inclined to share their experiences with potential recruits. This is extremely beneficial in helping recruits visualize military life. Recruiters also emphasize concrete information. The emphasis on choice of training versus a presentation of a specific training agenda may in some cases undermine this effort. Recruits are sometimes led to focus on what they cannot get, or may not get, rather than on the positive aspects of what is available to them.
- o Advertising is generally effective in making recruits feel good about their decision.
- o Direct mail marketing is viewed as insulting. Potential recruits cannot understand why the military would send them such material. It implies that they are not special and detracts somewhat from their decision.

On balance, this analysis suggests that in the commitment stage, current efforts net out as:

Recruiter Contact - Positive  
Advertising - Positive  
Direct Marketing - Negative

An overall summary of this analysis is presented in figure 3 on the next page.

Figure 3. Effectiveness of Present Marketing Activities



### C. Detailed Analysis of Recruiting Contact and Advertising

A central goal of this study was to explain how the recruiting environment symbols support and/or detract from the image created by advertising. The findings provide the following conclusions:

1. Advertising creates an image of the Army that emphasizes the following elements:

- a. There is focus on the individual rather than on a mass.
- b. The Army offers personal development with the theme "Be All That You Can Be", and with the promise of training in various specialties, depending on one's preference.
- c. Money for college and other benefits stand out.
- d. The advantages are long term, whether as an Army career or the preparation for civilian life later.
- e. The advertising creates images of greenness; camouflage dress; and red, white, and blue. Also, bright, lively, attractive people; exciting, adventurous activities; cooperative teams; novel environments.
- f. The advertising arouses some skepticism by seeming to paint an exaggerated, false, or one-sided picture. It enhances the Army as not being pedestrian and regimented, but as exalted and romantic, so that some expectations are unrealistic.

2. The recruiting process supports the advertising image in these ways:

- a. The process is generally highly individualized. Individuals receive mailings, they are sought out for interviews, visited in their homes, and examined surprisingly thoroughly.
- b. Individuals learn that the Army does not take just anyone, but has standards and is selective.
- c. Not only are there standards, but there is even a kind of fussiness about filling specific kinds of positions. A potential recruit may feel frustrated and disappointed by not getting a particular placement or having to wait for one to open up, but that testifies to the precision with which the Army chooses people.
- d. Skeptics are surprised at the extent to which the recruiting process does reinforce the advertising. They had thought the realities of recruitment would reveal the truth--that the Army was being dishonest and would do anything to get recruits. Instead, they find much emphasis on the Army finding out what the applicant wants and what the applicant is suited for, and that the many kinds of training and benefits are apparently real.
- e. Details cited indicate how the various elements of the recruiting

process affect these views. Individual attention is manifested when recruits are driven in recruiters' cars--that fact seems to matter more than what kind of car it is. The recruiting stations are usually small and local, and there are not many people there, so there is little sense of mass production going on. There are cozy and nonmilitary, individualistic touches--an ordinary couch, coffee, and tea cups.

f. The recruiters themselves represent a particular specialty, and seem to be devoted to their work. The recruits express much admiration for them, and find them especially friendly, welcoming, and personally interested. In addition, they show a firmness and goal-orientation in selling the Army that reinforces the kind of purposefulness the advertising also displays.

g. The neat dress, shiny shoes, short haircut, erect posture, and affirmative attitude of the recruiters are symbolic of the value of self-discipline, and serve to reassure the uncertain recruit of what can be achieved.

h. Camouflage fabric has a special symbolic value in representing the Army, linking its appearance in both advertising and on people at Army facilities, suggesting a blend of practicality, ingenuity, and subtlety.

i. The colors in the advertising-- green, brown, red, white, and blue--are repeated in the recruiting settings, symbolizing the Army and the United States, stirring recognition, feelings of patriotism and belonging.

j. The implications of patriotism, pride, and opportunities for achievement that the advertising conveys are repeated in the flags, posters, insignia, medallions, plaques, etc., at the recruiting stations.

k. Concern for the individual's comfort and well-being are seen at the MEPS in the brighter colors and in the provision of seats, lounge, television, and snacks.

3. The recruiting process also detracts from the image created by the advertising, or does not support it, in some ways. Usually, these are elements that reinforce more traditional ideas about the Army, that go counter to ideas of individuality and choice.

a. Although seeming pleasant, informal, and reassuring, the recruiting stations sometimes seem to carry their homeliness to absurd extremes, as in the more dilapidated recruiting stations with worn-out rugs, cheap furniture, or a leaky roof. Such neglect, deferred maintenance, or low quality reinforce notions of the Army as a low-level priority, as the grungiest and least of the armed forces.

b. The recruiters are generally praised, but seem overly disciplined when recruits focus on their short haircuts or think their pitch is too canned.

c. The MEPS is more impersonal than the local recruiting stations. It seems colder, more institutional, and reminds one more of the traditional hurry up and wait theme. More people are being processed, the paperwork is demanding, the physical examinations are more like a production line.

d. The examiners and counselors are praised as conscientious and helpful, but they are inevitably less accommodating than the recruiters seem to be. They have to present the needs of the Army more directly, and often bear the brunt of not being able to oblige all the wishes of the recruits. As figure 2 shows, the Vitality Index (number of wild animals chosen to characterize the Army) declines as the recruiting process brings to the fore the less exciting aspects of the Army.

e. Disappointments stir ill feelings, and are the greatest contradiction of the advertising. If recruits are rejected, they resent the process and the failure of promises they felt were made to them; when recruits reject enlistment, they resent the pressure put on them to change their minds or the criticism they sometimes receive from disappointed recruiters.

#### D. Recommendations

This study was intended as a preliminary qualitative exploration of the total marketing approach. As such, recommendations should be viewed as tentative and subject to further validation. With this in mind, the following courses of action are suggested by the present findings.

Overall, the study suggests a strong need to develop a comprehensive strategy that is sensitive to the experiences and perceptions of recruits at each stage of the recruiting process. Moreover, it is apparent that present efforts perform least well in the consideration stage. And, as the targeting of high achievement potential recruits increases, this weakness could become more of a problem.

Specific recommendations are as follows.

##### 1. Consideration Stage

a. Home and school are the most important communication sources in this stage. Yet recruitment takes place largely outside these influences (with the notable exception of families with military histories). The perception of recruiter "pressure tactics" must be lessened. This suggests any number of potential opportunities:

- o Special in-school programs that counselors could use with students
- o Training programs for high school counselors
- o Parent workshops
- o Events (both in-school and out) that allow students to sample military life
- o School counseling volunteers with previous military experience

b. Direct marketing should separate initial awareness from follow-up contact. Two kinds of contact are indicated:

- o Reminders that seek to maintain awareness/spark interest without seeming

redundant or overly sales-oriented.

- o Materials that become more focused and relate to the specific interests of the potential recruit. The idea would be to convey a sense of using this material as an information resource. It could also be used to facilitate recruiter contact by providing a rationale for this contact.

c. Advertising objectives should be expanded to address the college decision frame. The military needs to be represented as more than just a secondary option if college must be postponed. A strategy needs to be developed showing the military either as (1) an integral part of the "go to college" option or (2) as an equally viable alternative.

## 2. Recruitment Stage

a. The relationship orientation of recruiters should be rewarded and strengthened. Training should stress ways of establishing contact without creating a perception of pressure as this is the primary barrier to relationship formation.

b. Direct marketing should be personalized and/or recruiter-generated at this stage.

c. The central role of the recruiting stations can be enhanced by some upgrading of decor, furnishings, and equipment to more specifically recognize the stations as transitional in character between home and Army. That implies furnishings and touches--pictures, utensils, etc.-- that are friendly, comfortable, provide refreshment, and in various ways show the setting is human and humane. It also means there should be modern equipment, air conditioning, up-to-date computers, etc.

d. The recruiting personnel represent the Army, but also have some element of parent, uncle/aunt, older sibling, in the way they seek to guide the recruit in some optimal direction. This aspect becomes especially important to those recruits who are going counter to the wishes of one or both of their parents, and to those many recruits who come from broken homes. Recruiters' training might reflect this important issue, so that their goals as recruiters do not become overriding but take reasonable account of the recruits' freedom of choice.

e. Advertising should address the barrier that perceptions of basic training create for many potential recruits at this stage.

## 3. Commitment Stage

a. The names of potential recruits at this stage should be eliminated from any direct marketing activities.

b. Exposing potential recruits to other military role models would be effective.

c. Any events that allow recruits to experience military activities would be effective.

d. The focus on obtaining a choice of training should be de-emphasized. Presenting the specific positive aspects of one (or a few) available training programs should be emphasized.

#### E. Further Research for Measurement and Validation

This research has generated hypotheses that need to be followed up by subsequent work. Two specific lines of inquiry are recommended: (1) longitudinal tracking and (2) experimental pilot programs.

##### 1. Longitudinal Tracking

The importance of the three distinct stages in the recruiting process indicates that a quantitative, longitudinal tracking study is warranted. In such a study a sample of high school students would be followed from their junior year on. They would be interviewed periodically about their experiences and perceptions.

Some interviews would be conducted at various key points in time. Others might be triggered by the person's behavior. Data collection might also employ diary methods and perhaps peer interviews. It would be important to design the research so that the effects of repeated interviewing could be detected.

The critical part of this research would be to design questionnaire measures reflecting the findings of this study and other relevant qualitative studies. Two examples:

- o An index of perceived recruiter pressure could be constructed using items such as one concerning feelings about recruiter phone calls.
- o The vitality aspect of the Army's image could be measured using an indirect, unobtrusive question based on the approach developed in this study.

##### 2. Experimental Pilot Programs

Although quantitative research would be useful in extending our understanding of the stages in the recruiting process, it must be remembered that this process itself depends on the activities of the Army. The Army recruitment effort in part shapes the process. Thus, measurements of the process at any point in time, while valuable, will not be sufficient.

Accordingly, it is recommended that consideration be given to validating the conclusions and recommendations of this study through a series of small-scale pilot experiments. For example, a group of recruiting stations could be redecorated to have a more homelike atmosphere. The reactions of potential recruits could then be compared to those of a control group in terms of the impact on the perceived "relationship" with the recruiter.

A series of small studies such as this could go beyond the recruiting process as it now exists to evaluate how it could be. The results of these pilot experiments would be highly actionable.

#### IV. DETAILED FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The main body of this report discusses the findings in detail, with illustrations of how they are expressed by the respondents. First, the pre-recruitment viewpoints, perceptions, and attitudes of the high school seniors are described and interpreted. Verbatim quotes from the interviews are given to convey the exact tenor of the findings. To reflect the integration of findings from the different methods used, quotes from the focus groups appear in quotation marks; those from the individual interviews do not.

##### A. Perceptions of Pre-recruits

###### 1. Attending College as the Frame of Reference For Decision Making.

These young people talk readily about their plans. With graduation imminent, they are focused on thinking about the near future, with acute concerns about their planning and for what the future will hold.

Because of their status as seniors, almost all of them have considered a number of possibilities for their lives after graduation. Of the group, most say that they have seriously considered college for next year. It is evident that for most middle-class youth and many working-class youth, deciding about whether one can or will go to college is the first determination that has to be made. Of those who do not feel able to go, for various reasons, thoughts turn to going to work on a job to explore that either as a means of earning money for college or just to make a living. A minority have ideas about trade school, bumming around, developing a venture of some sort.

Most potential recruits feel that it is assumed that they will go to college. They see this as the social norm for their situation.

"It was always assumed that I would go to college if I could."

"It is most assumed that you will go to college. You only won't if you can't. Everyone puts it that way."

"I talked to an older friend in college. Found out what it was like. I think you start out with college in mind. With that on your mind, you talk to people. . . find out if you can go."

"They have a (computer) system. You can plug in location, what you can afford...It'll give you a list of schools. That's what people do, come up with a list of schools. That's what they're looking for."

"My counselor was good. She knew all about schools...whether you could get in. . . She knew I wanted to get away from home. She could tell me about a small school that would be just right. She knew all that stuff."

"I always wanted to be a flight attendant. So all the college

stuff rolled right off me. You feel a little different, but if you know exactly what you want to do, people can respect that."

"Some classes, they talk about this and that will be helpful in college. It all points that way."

"A section of the school is college interested. Or feel you have to be. The other is like. . . ignoramuses."

School counselors communicate the college expectation very clearly.

"We have like a college counselor at our school. He comes around to the classes. Tells us to come get a brochure if we are interested."

"There is nothing really about not going to college. Anything you get assumes that college is where it's at."

The frame of reference for making a decision about what to do after high school becomes dominated by college attendance. The decision is framed as going to college versus not being able to go. Not being able to go is viewed more as postponing college, or at least deciding on it later, than as an explicit decision not to attend.

"Even sophomore year they start talking about tests. Makes you think, what about college? If you don't get in, that's a problem. Means you'll have to wait, try to go later."

"There's not a lot of choices for people after school. For some people maybe more. But, for a lot of people there's not. You make it to a school you can get in, but lots don't."

"You can't get a job without experience. With us being young, you wind up at a Burger King. So the choice is to keep going to school or do something until you can. That's where the military comes in."

"College ain't for everybody. But it's like you're nobody if you're not going. You either go or wind up in no man's land."

"I think if you're looking for a job, it means more for them to see 'college' than 'armed forces.' If two people are the same, they'd pick the one with college. So college is what you think about. Sure it might not work out after a year, then you have to cope."

Getting a job is not viewed as a realistic choice. Any job a person could get would be a low-paying one with little chance of advancement.

"What else (beside college) is there to do. Guys that work - \$1 an hour. You're not going to make a living anyway."

"You know people who graduated like last year. They have jobs but they're not making any money. You know what I mean. Plus they're so bored."

"People who get jobs are not on the right track. They're going nowhere, in trouble...Doesn't matter if I take a drink, know what I mean."

"The first day of school I saw five guys who graduated last year. Got jobs. And they were at school."

"I'd get bored. Like the summer. After a while, a job is like the same thing over and over, the kind of job you can get. And there is nothing else to do."

"A little job. After going to high school. A waste."

"Everything is so advanced these days. You can't just go out and get a job. They want experience, training."

"My boss at work. I see he's going to community college at night. He can't make it, wife, kids."

"I have a part-time job now and I'm not too enthused about it. It'd be worse full-time. If you want to get anywhere you have to go to college."

"I know like one of my neighbors went out and got a job after high school. Now she is going to go back 'cause you just don't make the money. It's not really an option - just to get a job."

The college frame of reference is the common experience of the higher achievement high school senior. Any other orientation identifies a person as either someone with a personal problem or as a low achiever.

"I hate school so much, I'm just not going to college. I think the military is for someone like me."

"I have three classes that are like college courses. And they like pile stuff on you. And man I can't take it. I want to try something new. I'm going to explore the military for that reason."

"If you're good at school, you should go to college. There are people who don't like school, so they go out and get a job. Then some people want to try something different. So they try the military. Makes a man out of you. They go for that."

"You know, like some people want to work with their hands, not go to college. The military is for them."

"If everyone knows you're not the kind of student to go to

college, it's just 'where are you going to work?' Or the military or whatever."

The decision process is thus perceived by most students as sequential. The first decision concerns college, only then is military service considered.

"The Army is a fall back basically. . . not something you compare to college."

"If I can't make it to college, then I can go into the Air Force or something. Then I be willing. That's the way to use the Army."

"It (service) comes across as an alternative. But after, like something to fall back on."

"I look at it like this. If I don't go to school right now, then I'll spend four years or two years doing something else (service). But I'll make that decision when I have to."

"You have some schools that are fall backs if you don't make it. After that, it's the Army."

"About my junior year I thought about college. Decided I couldn't go. So now I am undecided about what I want to do. Maybe I'll look at the military."

"If you don't have the money (for college), than you might consider the military. And if you are kind of a lazy person, you might consider the military to kind of get yourself in tune. Be more strict with yourself. This could help later in college."

"I started thinking of the military the summer after I graduated. I was supposed to go to Loyola, but didn't have the money...I'm still not set on it. Might go to U.I.C. But maybe if I go into military it'll give me a chance to think, get experience before deciding to go to college. Anyway, I'm thinking about it since I wouldn't go to Loyola."

A subsample of the seniors was screened who had some definite interest in military service. The idea of military service is then seen to be intermingled with other kinds of plans. One young man is planning to go to a four-year school, and to play soccer while doing so, but is at the moment hoping for acceptance at West Point. One was signing up the following Wednesday for four years in the Army. Another says he is definitely planning to join the Army, "as long as they give me what they say they will." One has already enlisted in the Air Force. One plans to work for the summer, then leave for Marine boot camp, hoping to get training in aircraft maintenance in the Marines. One feels that he will go into the Air Force if he does not get a golf scholarship. One is definitely planning to spend the summer with the Illinois National Guard, then start one of the two Illinois colleges to which he has been accepted. One is seriously considering the National Guard and the College of DuPage unless his scores are over 36 on the ACT.

in which case he will focus on a four-year school. Another is planning to go to the College of DuPage for one year, then join the Air Guard, unless he receives a four-year university scholarship.

## 2. Family and Friends Communicate the College Frame of Reference

The college frame of reference is strongly supported in most cases by family and friends.

"What college are you going to? The Army! Couldn't you get into a college or anything? That's the way your friends are."

"Why do people go to college? Or even a certain college? It's because their friends go to it. If all my friends started joining the Army, I'm sure the Army would start looking like something I should consider."

"As a girl, my friends would never even talk about the military."

"You talk to friends a lot. And friends who have been to college make it sound good. You get to go out when you want, go to parties."

"I would kind of disappoint my parents if I don't go to college."

"My parents aren't really pressuring me. Bah! I know they think it would be good (going to college). The choice is up to me. I know what they think though."

"Parents usually push their kids to go to college...Yeah, there's pressure there, to go if you can. That's society though, really."

If the person has a close tie to someone in the military, this potentially moderates the college frame of reference.

"My father was in the Air Force. He was a computer technician. Now he works for AT&T. It was a good opportunity for him. So I think that that's a good way."

"If you have a cousin or uncle, like me, he has told you about the service and brings it up when you start thinking about what to do. That makes it seem more like something real."

## 3. The Choice Process

The relative uncertainty that high school students feel is reflected in the multiple responses to the question: Which of the following possibilities have you seriously considered? (See table 3.)

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Table 3. Possibilities after Graduation  
(N=50, multiple choices)

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1. Trade school	11
2. College	48
3. Army	21
4. Navy, Marines, Air Force	26
5. Job	29

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Seniors feel a need for help in the consideration of options. Some describe much parental interaction and pressure in the planning process, others indicate that they pushed hard for enough counselor time to get help in considering options. For those with the energy and maturity to pursue help, and who have received it, school support can be an integral factor in their planning.

We have a guidance program at our school, and I have requested info from several schools. I visited one school, and I've had more counseling with the school counselor and taken some tests. My family encourages me. We work the problem out together.

Various kinds of helpers may get involved--relatives, friends, etc.

My high school counselor has helped me a lot, and my one teacher. A lot of my brothers and sisters didn't go to college, but some did, and they are all behind me.

Parents may be negative about service as a hazard, or they may be reflecting the protest of the 60s. Or may be negative because of their own prior experiences with service.

My uncle influenced me. He and my father disagreed with my going into the Air Force. Uncle was bringing me papers for school in Maryland. I think that going to college is a good idea anyway.

Some who feel pushed by parents toward college are apprehensive about failure.

It doesn't look good if you flunk out of college...My parents want me to have college so if my going into Dad's business doesn't work out, I'd have another alternative. I've been applying and talking to counselors.

When seniors' parents push toward immediate entry into college, whether privately or through service-connected schooling, the student may feel uncertain, but having many options through sports skills helps ease the pain. A service

academy, as West Point in this instance, may be more attractive than other schools, since some students think it may offer more.

My parents figured on me going to college, and I want to please them. Against it was that I didn't know if I wanted to go to school for another four years. I've completed the application process for about five or six colleges, and I've spoken to some college coaches. Five is the limit under NCAA rules, so I'll visit five colleges. West Point is one of the colleges I'm considering. That means five years of service after college.

In general, students experience a good deal of stress while considering what they're going to do.

"My Dad kept pushing me. What are you going to do? What are you going to do? What are you going to do?"

"There was one day, after football practice, I just had to walk away from everything... It got to me so bad I just started walking straight down Dodge St. I ended up..."

"You feel the pressure to decide something before it's too late. Too much time goes by. You can't get in anywhere."

"Pressure from friends... they're into college. Doing good. What's wrong with you?"

"Parents, family, stuff, always asking what are you going to do after school? Pressure from all sorts of people. Friends, family...pressure to make up your mind."

"You're trying to deal with your school work and decide. And it's hard."

"Worried... You'll be out some Friday night, just sitting around talking. It comes up everywhere you go. No matter who you talk to."

"Relatives, especially relatives. Your grandmother, your uncles, all want to know what you're doing. You hear it all the time... It's annoying."

Some of the seniors are sufficiently apprehensive about leaving home and being so far away (and for economic reasons as well) that they restrict themselves to local junior colleges or nearby branches of state schools.

My brother goes to Whitewater, and that's where I'm going. It's close enough to home, but far enough to get away. They have a good business school. I've applied there and been accepted.

#### 4. Economic Concerns

The thinking of most potential recruits is dominated by economic concerns. They are concerned about their long-term financial future. This concern tends to outweigh other potential needs, such as having a good time.

"Everything is about money. You can't survive with a job at Toys R Us...That's not going to cut it. Once you start thinking about graduating, you see it's not just after school."

"Pretty much you can't make a lot of money if you don't go to college. That makes you start to think you have to go."

"Dollar for dollar, college is the best investment. It is going to increase the money you earn."

"Whichever way you go, it's worth more. If I go to college and then go into the service, I'll go in at a higher rank."

"College doesn't mean you're going to be earning so much money... But it's the only way to try to find a career that is not going to diminish."

"Lot of people get degrees and then can't find a job. Psychology or something. You have to see college as a stepping stone to something."

"College is not the solution. But it is the way to get the solution to what you're going to do with your life."

Some are even eagerly searching out various avenues, including a military academy, because they may be achieving, but feel that tuition would be difficult to muster for the family.

I've looked into going through the Army ROTC, and I've read brochures on a lot of colleges, planning...studied for and took ACT & SAT. Looked into military academies. I'm applying to colleges, ROTC, and financial aid statements...parents are supportive but money is a problem.

Fretfulness about both acceptance and cost make a service connection seem attractive.

I've gone to college meetings held at school and I went to the college fair in Milwaukee. Have to plan for financial aid...Don't know if I'll get accepted at the two colleges I've applied to. Family is open, but want me to go on with after high school schooling...Mom has mentioned ROTC and the GI Bill, making sure I knew about them.

I've applied to three colleges, Whitewater, La Crosse and Madison, and been accepted by all three. I've returned information back to the Air Force. I'm going to apply for a golf scholarship this spring. A friend is returning from the Air Force, and I will talk to him. My folks have

been encouraging.

#### 5. Effectiveness of Personal Influence

Recruiters coming to the school help to stimulate interest in service.

I went through three tests of ASVAB and I found out two weeks after taking the last one that I was accepted into the service. Whenever recruiters came to the school, I talked to them to see about the jobs offered and about the schooling I would need. Also, I read through the pamphlets and whatever they would bring in...I want to make the Army my career, going in at 18 and out at 38. I can retire with a full pension and still get another job. I will be young enough to do this...My Mom is totally behind me. My Dad is behind me, but he told me to go into the Air Force. I am excited about going in.

"You see the representatives (recruiters) around. Information comes. You sort of look at it. It lets you know it's there."

"I had a call from the Navy and it was helpful. He asked me what I wanted to do. If I wanted to go to college. He explained what they could do and wasn't pushy or anything. Didn't bother me after that like you hear them doing."

"Sometimes they (recruiters) just walk around the school. Talk to people. That's what makes you know about it."

A parent's earlier experience in service acts as a model. This young man is set on the Marines, following his father's earlier years, and has been determined about it since he was eight years old:

Ever since I was eight, I have been interested because my father was a Marine. I looked to him as a role model. When I went to high school, freshman year, I talked to a Marine recruiter and he gave me more information, which created more interest. I like the challenge and experience I would get. At no time did I have any doubts about my decision...At first, my family wanted me to go to college, but they did not think I was serious about the Marines. When they realized I was, they encouraged me and stood by my decision...Most of my friends are planning to work for a year to get money for junior colleges and universities. Most think my plans are stupid and it will not help me in the future. They do not think it is a good career.

#### 6. Military Service as a Way of Getting to College

Given the college frame of reference, military service is viewed most positively as a way of getting to college. Information about the military and college is of greatest interest when students begin to consider what they are going to do.

"I went in, talked to a couple of recruiters. What they say is pretty impressive. I can enlist in reserves and still go to school full

time...I think that's what I'm really going to do. It's a good way to get to college. It only costs you a few weekends."

"The recruiters came to school. Told us about the benefits, GI Bill and stuff. Sounded kind of interesting when they put it that way."

"The Army, that would be a way to get money for college. It's a hard way, but it's a way."

#### 7. Service as an Opportunity for Career Training and Respect

After college is when there is greatest interest in the training possibilities of military service. Training, however, is considered a bonus rather than a primary objective. The person with a strong and special interest in a specific training program is the exception. The Air Force and Navy are more likely to interest such individuals.

"College is number one. But I'd be interested in what kind of training they give you."

"If you had to go in the service to go to college, so be it. If in doing that, you picked up some good skills, gravy."

"My Dad joined, was an air traffic controller. Great, huh. But he decided he didn't want to do that. The pressure, nuts. Then he had to go and go to college for four years. So, see, it's hard to figure the training. It may sound good, but will it really help? With college, you know."

"The Air Force and Navy have the most technical training and are more selective. The Army is less."

"The Air Force has a lot of technical training. But then the Army, a lot of maintenance stuff."

This has been a dream since fourth grade. In favor, I would have a career and be respected by people. A reason against would be if I got real serious with a girl...My family supports my decision...My friends make fun of my plans, and tease me about the routine I will have, but they don't have the facts. I'll have money, a place to live, food, rent, and a career.

I have two plans. I don't know which one I am going to do. First, is to attend College of DuPage while working. Second, is to join the Army Guard, the Illinois National Guard, then College of DuPage and a four-year college...My counselors at school like the first plan, my father really wants me to go into the Guard. With the second, my father would be proud of me, and I'd get some college money and job experience from doing it. All my friends are going to four-year colleges.

## 8. Debating Army Enlistment

Enlistment is regarded with some suspicion by many. They ask themselves, "Is the Army reliable?" They are unsure whether to take information about the Army at face value.

"They start talking about money this, money that. There's a catch to all of it."

"They do have some training programs. Not a lot though. And you might not get one."

"Guaranteed training is the only thing. If they can't guarantee you, it's not worth going in."

"My brother went down when I started talking to the recruiter. Made sure the recruiter didn't tell me nothing wrong."

I'm thinking about the Army. My parents might not be able to afford to send me to college. The money is the big thing, but what is against it is that somehow they will screw me over, and not let me do what they said they will...My father is helping me in the various decisions and procedures... My Mom feels the same way I do, that I should go in right after high school. My father thinks I should go to college first and go in as an officer.

## 9. Perceptions of Military Service

On the plus side, seniors know that the military is available as an option, and are aware that some choose it, whether they consider it for themselves or not.

- + This choice is smart for many people, who can then have a dual career, may go to college or get further schooling.
- + They solve financial problems.
- + They can get challenged while working very hard.
- + Service is natural for those who have had parents or relatives in the service.
- + It has appeal for those who are especially patriotic.
- + Motives of bravery, courage, discipline, and toughness come to mind.
- + One may be attracted to an atmosphere of excitement and danger.

On the negative side, enlisting in the military service is not seen as an ordinary thing. Those who go into the service may be seen as somehow lacking.

- They are uncertain, not sure of what they want.
- They have nowhere else to go.
- They are not smart enough to handle college.
- They are foolish to subject themselves to the risk.

#### 10. Basic Training as an Obstacle to Consideration

Many potential recruits are apprehensive about basic training. This serves as a barrier to their thinking more extensively about military service.

"I'm not sure I could handle that (basic). It makes you not want to think about the service."

"I got a lot of older cousins went in the Army. They told me it was rough at first. Makes it seem, well, not your first choice anyway."

"I heard someone got shot in boot camp. They kept it secret. You don't find out things like that from recruiters."

"I heard after boot camp it ain't that bad. It's hard not to think about that though."

"I like my hair. Couldn't take basic."

#### 11. Mixed Feelings About the Army Projected in Various Ways

Using the way the Army is seen as coming across from the media, in movies, and in television shows, the youths' comments show the same general positive and negative elements. In commenting on the motion pictures that show what being in the Army is like, the focus goes in two main directions.

Some concentrate on the themes that are serious, aggressive, gory, and that depict service in terms of fighting and dying. The reactions to these ideas may emphasize their frightening aspects, their heroic and inspiring qualities, or their controversial political dimensions. Then there are those who focus on films that are more simply romantic, humorous, and patriotic in theme.

Thus, movies about the Army say to some that it is a great place, fun even when hard work, satisfying and fulfilling, agreeably macho and sometimes glorious, while others see Army movies as depicting the service as primarily scary, tough, strict, rough, brutal, prison-like, unfair, harsh, excessively aggressive.

All respondents have seen television shows and/or series that have an Army setting. One view of the Army is adventurous, glamorous, and rewarding in its depiction of heroic adventures by "good guys" who must commonly be disciplined into the right spirit and behavior.

Another view of the Army is that of a fun, easy, exciting existence, away

from ordinary life, where many things are a big joke; or where it is sentimental, and a way for "people to get to know each other better" and to have buddies.

Opposing both of these views is that of an Army that is rough, tough, violent, bloody, with "Rambo types." In this view, the Army is seen as a cruel and often unfair institution; at best, a "form of prison and (yet) a place to get a good education in certain trades."

## 12. The Army in Commercials

Army television commercials seem lively and engaging. Men and women appearing in the advertising on television are seen as energetic and achieving in the various settings used. The commercials are described as entertaining, interesting, exciting. They are regarded as helpful, realistic, practical, and as offering opportunities for self-fulfillment within a context of hard work and certain demands.

Receptivity is greatest to ads that refer to college funding or training. Receptivity is least to advertising that seems to feature the combat or adventure side of service.

"The only ads that even come close to making me want to go in is the ones that say go in and get trained in computers. Or have enough to go to college."

"Be all you can be. Somebody's going to push you. I think that's good. You want to get ahead. I'm not quite sure where I'd be going with the Army. Good at fighting?"

"They (commercials) make it seem adventurous. Glorified. They talk about it like a career too. And college. They play up the action side, though."

In most studies that touch on advertising, there is usually much negative content about commercials. That is not true in this study. Partly, this is due to the implicit, and sometimes explicit, recognition of the need for a standing military force, and for recruitment actions that will gain public awareness and participation. However, some people feel that the ads are repetitious or do not explain enough, and that they do not show the "down" side. But few are markedly critical.

The ads on TV show you come out and get a good job. That may not be true. Take infantry, you come out. What can you do, security guard?"

"They say, Be All You Can Be. Be up to your limitations. Be everything you can. Everything you want to be...That's good. Still, good at what?"

## 13. Pictures in Army Mailers

Pictures of scenes depicting Army personnel communicate a demanding and rewarding experience. Seniors raise some themes repeatedly after seeing such pictures.

- New recruits are raw, and they have a lot to learn at the beginning, and there are many rules and critical sergeants. (See Appendix C, p. 76.)

An Army sergeant is talking to new recruits at the beginning of basic. In the end, they know about the Army, and will be wiser about what their job is.

Looks like the first day in the Army. An Army base somewhere. The one guy is yelling at the others. The group going into housing would be the next step.

These are people just getting into camp. They are being told the rules, and what they are here to do.

- Failure is a possibility. (See Appendix C, p. 76-77.)

The drill instructor is trying to get them into shape. From the looks on their faces, a couple of them will probably be kicked out.

The recruits are preparing for basic training the next day. A few will be kicked out because of attitude problems and the rest will get through training OK.

- Punishment is a possibility. (See Appendix C, p. 77.)

He's checking recruits for disciplinary measures, and focusing in on one certain recruit for punishment or something.

- Army activities are chances for competition, adventure, success, cleverness, superiority. (See Appendix C, p. 78.)

It looks like practice on maneuvers and they are going against another team, and they are trying to figure out where to ambush them. They succeeded.

These guys are on a field exercise. Looking at a map. It's a type of war game. They capture the other guys' flag. They win.

- Women can succeed, and sacrifice, also. (See Appendix C, p. 79.)

These are ladies in the Army that excel at what they do. Like the elite group, under the drill sergeant. They are preparing to secretly find out plans from the Russians, like missiles, or something. They succeed in finding out the secret plans, but two of them get killed.

- Comradeship and lasting friendship are important benefits. (See Appendix C, p. 76.)

I think this is these guys' first day in the Army, and this is their captain, and he's telling them what they are going to be in for. It will turn out that this bunch of boys will become best friends.

- Successful completion of service produces confidence, positive change, and pride. However stern the discipline, most assume that there is personal growth and profit from the experience. Development, good memories, and good prospects are the outcome. (See Appendix C, p. 80.)

This boy is just leaving basic training and looks to be pleased with what he's completed, and confident with his future.

He's coming home and he looks as though he's a changed person and he's going to put his bag down and give his mother a hug and say, "I'm home." I think his parents and family would be proud it helped him.

A guy leaving the Army. Saying good-bye. Happy to be going home, remembering the times he had in the Army.

#### 14. Awareness Created by Direct Mail

Early awareness of the military is stimulated by direct mail. There is a feeling, however, that as one continues to get such material, there is a great deal of redundancy and little new information. Eventually, mailers come to be regarded as junk mail.

"I think it (mail) is helpful if you're not sure what you want to do. They have a list of stuff you can do in the Army. Maybe you could find something you'd like. When you first get it, you read it."

"I got a brochure from the Air Force. Got a free pair of socks. Sweatbands. Free Marine poster. At first it's fun and you like the attention."

"It's a lot, with all the stuff you get from colleges and the military. At first it's like, 'Wow, look at the mail I'm getting.' Then it's like, 'This is getting to be a bother.'"

"Around junior year you get mail and they (recruiters) start coming to school. I got to a point I wouldn't put my phone number on stuff. 'Cause they do call, hassle you."

"They have information about, like, how long you could enlist for. Basic stuff. Nothing so much new."

"You get so, What can I get? The last one, I didn't even open the brochure. I just wanted the T-shirt."

"I get a lot of mail. Like just about everyday. Some of that stuff is just repeating the same old stuff...You feel like they just keep dumping it on you."

More specific reactions included the following.

- The offer of monetary assistance stands out.

For the Army, if you wen' in they would pay for college, and they told the type of things they can do. I thought the college aid program was pretty good.

I remember the GI Bill. I think the mailings are a good idea, but in my case I already made plans.

Yes, ROTC scholarship material. I read most of them. I thought they were good, but not for me. I thought they would appeal to others.

Yes, they said they would pay for college. That the Army was a good preparation for it. I didn't pay much attention.

- The mailers emphasize the good side of Army life. That makes some people cynical.

Yes, I remember they all pointed out the fact of assisting in dollar support, they all show the bright side.

They didn't describe boot camp, gas chambers, throwing up, push-ups that I hear about from my brother who went last summer. So, when you sign up, you get a bad attitude about it.

- Mail may stimulate family discussion

Yes, I remember the Army was giving away free socks. I really didn't take them too serious. With the family, we kind of joked about my joining.

Yes! My Dad thinks I should go into the Army Corps of Engineers. He was a Marine in Vietnam.

My father has mentioned the idea of me going into service. He was in the service.

Yes, my Dad was very set on the Illinois Guard. He was in the Army after WWII. I felt that going away for two years was not for me at this point.

They ridiculed it. Dad thinks the Army is the lowest branch. The family thinks it's more for kids who had troubles, discipline problems.

Yes, first they thought I was going to join, but then they had a talk with me as to why I shouldn't join unless there was a war. Dad doesn't want me to start my life in the late twenties as he did.

Dad liked the idea and Mom did not.

Yes, my Dad loved it. He encouraged me to join, and said how it would pay for schooling. My Mom said throw it out. Get rid of it. You don't need it.

Yes, and the family laughed at it. They joked about various of me in the Army, because I am the last person to expect to go in, because I am not one to take orders.

#### 15. The Army as an Animal

Pre-recruitment respondents were asked to project their impressions of the Army in several ways: by telling stories about pictures of Army scenes, by characterizing the Army "as if it were an animal;" by speculating about what they would get from a term or a career in the service; and by imagining what the recruitment process and environment would be like.

Of the 12 animals provided in a list, the respondents were asked to pick two that fit their impressions of the Army, and to explain their choices, which are tabulated in table 4.

The 19 choices in the column on the right imply characterizations of Army personnel as being basically obedient workers who are stubborn, strong, hard-working, and loyal, as symbolized by the tame, domesticated animals in the column. The squirrel is the exception, mainly just representing the general idea of being outdoors, or busy seeing to things.

More substantial are the 78 choices on the left, with the perception of Army personnel as being strong, tough, aggressive, powerful, big, and dominating, as symbolized by the wild and more predatory animals in the first column. If we take the percentage of wild animals chosen as a Vitality Index, the pre-recruits provided a score of 80%.

Table 4. If The Army Were an Animal  
(N=50, two choices requested)

Tiger	18	Mule	6
Lion	18	Horse	4
Bull	15	Dog	4
Wolf	15	Squirrel	3
Bear	12	Elephant	2
		Cow	0
		Cat	0
		No response	3

#### 16. Resistance to Pressure from Recruiters

Early contact with recruiters is positive. Seniors appreciate the availability of recruiters at their schools in case they should have questions. Follow-up calls by recruiters, however, are eventually seen as a source of pressure. This leads people to try to avoid the recruiters.

"Some of the recruiters will tell you they are not going to pressure you, just want to tell you what they can do for you. But this one guy, Army, kept on bugging me, calling me every other day. I had to tell him, 'I'll talk to you, but when I'm ready.'"

"They could let you know they're still there. In case things change. But I don't think they should call you all the time or keep after you."

"The Army, Air Force, stuff like that. They pressure you, oh man! Recruiters call me. His pitch is just to keep on talking and calling. Not to take no for an answer."

"Those Army recruiters, not only do they pitch but they push you. And they do a good job too. Trying to get you to just say yes."

"They called me a couple of times each. I said like no. Then it's like, they kept on pestering me. So you get like trying to avoid them."

"To get rid of this recruiter, I said, 'OK, I'll come down there.' I didn't show up. So one day he came by the house. That's

scary."

"He called me four times in one week. 'Got to take the test.' I was going to. Finally, I said, 'Look here, don't call me, I'll call you.'"

"When I was junior and then senior, recruiters called me like everyday. I wake up in the morning and its the Navy. Next morning it's the Air Force. They got pretty nasty. Calling every five minutes...They'd call me at 10:30 at night. Just to get hold of me. I'd say I'd call, then wouldn't, so they'd keep after me. Finally you learn you have to say 'No!' ten times."

#### 17. Anticipating the Recruiting Process

The pre-recruitment respondents were asked what they would expect each of a series of items about Army recruitment to be like, to imagine the process if they had not been through it, as most had not.

a. What does an Army recruiting station look like? What first impression comes to mind?

Among various vague associations with office buildings and nothing special, some thoughts are positive--a regular office, a nice place, a big, open room. But the most concrete ideas are that the recruiting station is likely to be small, old, and plain.

Small building, kind of worn out, impression that I wouldn't like being there.

An old building, bad area.

A plain building, probably looks like a storefront, nothing elaborate.

b. What kind of neighborhood is it in? What kind of people live there?

Again, thoughts are relatively vague, no vivid or distinctive imagery comes to mind.

It is in a business complex. Blue-collar people live there.

Any neighborhood, maybe a big city, all kinds of people.

A relatively nice neighborhood, all kinds of people, nice people and stuck-up people are around there.

c. What does it say on the outside of the recruiting station? What kinds of signs and pictures are there?

These questions call for more specific visualizations. They bring to mind posters, colors, people. There are then associations with the Army being inviting with lively, positive imagery, especially to "Be All That You Can Be."

Makes the Army look like a lot of fun. Exciting posters, sort of an official look to it.

Join the Armed Forces. Be All You Can Be. It would show men and women in uniform smiling happily, making everything look like an adventure or vacation. Show all fun things.

Friendly, nice, "Join the Army" posters.

d. What is it like inside? What feeling do you get from it?

Thinking about the actual interior of the recruiting station tends to have a more personal and emotional impact. While many describe it mainly as like some ordinary busy office, "a regular office," there are even more expressions of intimidation and apprehension.

I get feelings of apprehension, sort of.

The feeling I would get is that I'm going to be locked up for two years.

A not so friendly feeling.

Kind of cold atmosphere, not friendly, mostly.

It would give me a lonely feeling.

I would feel small, scared, cold, alone.

I get a bad feeling, because they would try to get me to sign something I did not want to yet.

e. Describe how you think it is probably furnished? What colors are used? Why do you think that?

Respondents mainly expect a practical sort of place ("It is not there to impress people with looks, it is there for a purpose") with standard office furniture and Army colors.

A couple of benches, very drab.

Very plain, simple colors, standard office furniture, nothing flashy, tan, black, blue.

Wooden tables, wooden chairs, nothing fancy, just the basics

you need, green and brown and tan, just the basic colors of the Army.

f. What kinds of sounds and noises do you hear when you go inside?

These are mainly the usual office sounds of conversation, typing and telephones, of a place that is busy, impersonal, serious.

People talking and phones ringing, also typing.

Everyone would be pretty silent, maybe with conversation with the kids and the recruiters.

Serious and busy atmosphere.

Not loud, no people talking loudly. You would hear phones, typewriters, a busy sound.

You won't hear anything, because all the doors of the separate offices are closed.

g. How does it smell? Why do you think so?

There is a strong consensus that a recruiting station would smell antiseptically clean--and of cigarette smoke if anything.

Very clean, constantly washed. I feel that cleanliness is part of the Army.

Odorless, clean.

Clean, like bleach was used.

It would smell like paper, an office smell, or very clean. That's the way the Army is, clean and a lot of paper work.

Antiseptic, very sterile, like rubbing alcohol.

It would smell like smoke, nervous people smoking cigarettes.

h. What might the recruiter look like? Have you met any? If so, where, and what did you think of them? How do recruiters talk? How do they act?

Many respondents have met recruiters, but whether or not, the impressions they have are similar. Recruiters are fairly readily characterized as well-dressed and erect, with short haircuts. They are said to be nice people, self-controlled, friendly and helpful, but firm and determined.

They are medium height, late twenties or early thirties. Met one at school. I thought he was a nice guy. Informative, and he opened your mind toward the service.

Like normal people, but with shaved hair. They are nice guys for the most part.

Well-dressed, sharp, neat. Like my uncles who were in service.

They stand straight up and sit straight up.

I imagine deep, strong voice, very serious, firm and friendly.

They want you to join, so they will be nice to you.

Straight, to the point, they'd probably act stubborn, feeling they were right.

They talk like they are trying to sell you something.

i. How do they put across the idea of enlisting in the Army? What kinds of choices do they offer? What kinds of promises or commitments do they make?

The seniors expect that recruiters would be helpful in telling the positive aspects of enlistment, that they would emphasize benefits, explain why the Army is worthwhile, that it offers better training and better schooling. They have a strong sense of many alternatives being offered by the Army.

They would say their benefits are real good.

Many things you can choose from--computers, linguistics, infantry.

A wide variety--MP, field, helicopter pilot, doctor, computers.

Probably like field combat--setting up bases, landing planes, computers, machines.

Intelligence, MPs, mechanics, communications. Types that like to take orders would enlist.

They promise you will find what you need.

They see the claimed results as basically threefold: (1) being in the Army as intrinsically beneficial to growth and personal insight, (2) gaining training that will mean a new career, and (3) the support for a college education.

You would learn a lot about yourself, and you would get a lot out of it.

You will be a different person when you get out, learn new skills.

Mostly money after service for college, the benefits.

College Fund and the GI Bill.

j. What would they want to know about you? How would they learn that? What qualifications would they be looking for?

Among the less informed or interested, the Army is not seen as expecting much from potential recruits, beyond a desire to be in the service, and a willingness to work hard.

They want hard workers, go-getters.

Not many qualifications except you want to be in the military.

Nevertheless, there is a general perception of the Army as more discriminating than that. It is seen as wanting to know about the candidates' interests and background. They expect concern with physical, mental, and moral qualifications, and with abilities and goals.

Your past history, any trouble with the law or medical. They can do a background check through the FBI and by my telling them. They want a high school diploma.

They would not want a bad kid or a criminal.

History of medical problems, mental, physical, and record of criminal wrongdoing, and your interest in politics.

What your interests are, what you are the best at, what you enjoy. They could talk to me, my family and friends and to my counselors at school.

## B. The Recruitment Process

Seventeen (17) respondents were interviewed at the MEPS in Chicago and in Milwaukee while they were being processed. They were asked about how they came to apply to the Army, what their anticipations of it are, and what they thought about the recruiting process.

### 1. Explanations for Enlisting

The explanations offered for joining the Army are familiar ones, falling into the following main categories:

a. Alternative to school: Some say they didn't like school, did not want to go on to college, or hoped to get education and training in the Army.

b. Alternative to a job: There are complaints about not being able to find employment--no jobs, no future.

c. The money: Some say they have no money, are in debt; others see the money as extra money, or as a way of saving for or funding the future.

d. Relatives: There are several references to family, parents, grandparents, uncles, siblings who were or are in service.

e. Deferred school: The college benefits for later study stand out as important.

f. Change: Various kinds of change are sought, as in adventure, travel, or more generally being ready for or needing a change.

g. Discipline: There are various kinds of disorientation, feelings of uncertainty, lack of goals, having nowhere to go, wanting discipline and planning for the future.

## 2. Perceptions of Military Service

The perceptions of military service and of the Army by these recruits are generally more positive and less ambivalent than those of the pre-recruits, taken as a group. Individuals going through the recruitment process see those going into military service as hard core, gung ho, adventurous, gaining an edge on their lives, strong, thinking ahead, aggressive, making a great choice.

a. The Army is viewed as having substance and offering opportunity. The sentence stem "The Army is..." is completed by such phrases as these:

- ...a great place to go and be a part of.
- ...the backbone of the services.
- ...a professional place.
- ...adventurous.
- ...full of unseen opportunities.
- ...a place to gain confidence in yourself.
- ...a learning experience.
- ...what I want.

b. There are many concrete benefits in mind. When asked what will be gained from service in the Army, their hopes and plans are explicit.

Training in survival...\$17,000 for college.

Lots of experience, working with people.

Self-discipline, experience outside of school, probably a lot of good friends, money for college, benefits, life insurance,

pension.

Enough money to pay back money to parents, and training that I want, either electrical or mechanical, plus \$17,000 in school money.

c. Being in the recruiting process, the candidates want to be positive, but some minor, less happy concerns show up. In telling stories about the various pictures they were shown, they refer to soldiers having to cut their hair very short, and to being yelled at. Their selections of animals that the Army is most like are similar to those made by the pre-recruits, with a bit more emphasis on the giving of orders and paperwork. One man said, "Slow as a mule, pushy as a bull." On the Vitality Index (percentage of wild animals), the candidates in process score .71 (compared to .80 for the pre-recruits), suggesting that the recruiting process is having a slightly depressing effect by its emphasis on the more tedious aspects of the Army.

### 3. Nature of the Recruiting Process

As the recruits discuss various elements of the recruiting process, their views tend to be normally distributed, with some highly positive and others sharply critical, but most are accepting and take the process as a necessary kind of bureaucratic procedure.

a. The recruiting station is mainly just an office. Depending on where it is, it is small or large. The small ones tend to seem more makeshift, perhaps cozier as a result.

It was small, with one room, a phone and a couple of posters on the wall. Also, letters from people who had been recruited.

Papers on desk, coffee with tea cups, part office, part house.

It's got an office, lots of books on the Army, it's got sergeants, computers, outprocessing items...the Army looks like a world of its own.

The larger stations--and for some, the only recruiting station was a MEPS--seem more institutional and impersonal. In these instances there is a greater feeling of being lost or nervous.

I felt lost, 'cause nothing was explained. My recruiter came to my home and also came to school. I've never been to a local recruiting center. MEPS is my first experience with a recruiting center.

A lot of pictures. It made me nervous.

Like a school administration building. When I first arrived, I felt like everyone would be in service, but not everyone working here was in the service.

A building with a lot of books and posters, and information about the Army. They are going to try to convince you as much as possible to join.

Just a basic building. Lot of people in uniform, lot of nervous people sitting around.

Big building reminded me of school, what will be expected of me.

A big airport or bus station, everybody is behind the counters.

b. The neighborhood varies from quiet to busy, from nice to rough and rowdy, depending on where it is. Most seem fine to the recruits, although the poorer neighborhoods suggest some possible threat.

You go in the back door so it's like no one will see you. It is getting kind of rough there.

I went out and walked around, didn't get hurt or anything.

Kind of isolated, more of an industrial-type area.

c. The exterior brings to mind the various services, with signs and posters.

Recruiting stations for the Armed Forces of the United States, about the different jobs that are offered and what life will be like.

Armed Forces recruiting stations, Army, Be All You Want To Be, climbing, graduation, enlistment.

There's pictures of flags and signs for each branch of the service.

Army, Be All That You Can Be, guys in uniform, action photos to show you how fun it is.

It says the Army's for you. There was also a sign that said closed for lunch.

d. The interior is experienced initially with some feelings of uneasiness or apprehension, but the stations seem reassuring places, partly because of their unpretentious character. The sounds are generally office-like, of phones, people talking, typewriters, computers, business-like, but relaxed. The smell is clean and fresh, no odors, unobtrusive. The atmosphere is generally comfortable, laid back, and friendly.

It's great, everything is in order, it gives me an excited and anxious feeling.

Lots of nervous people, lots of officers, lots of movement. I get an uneasy feeling.

I was nervous. I felt everyone would jump on me.

I felt nervous from seeing it. It was a new experience.

The paneling is brown, it seem dark in there. It was nice, it seemed cozy, not too neat, not too dirty.

Basic brown, light green, pretty much plain, not too flashy.

It was dark paneling. It was kind of homey.

I was wondering why the couch was there. I like the idea of the table with china, made it more casual.

Clean, secure feeling.

Safe, stable, clean, feel protected.

e. The recruiters are a highly praised group. The recruits talk about them in consistently positive terms. They describe them as professional military personnel, neatly dressed, with short hair, and in good shape. They seem to be pleasant role models, sergeants who contradict the stereotype of a tough, noisy sergeant.

They look clean-shaved and nice appearance. I first noticed their shiny shoes.

Younger, 30's, 40's, clean, short hair, well dressed in uniforms, neat and clean.

The recruiters are said to be authoritative, but friendly and attentive, willing to listen and to explain. They are focused on the task, but adaptive, nice and honest.

They talk like the person they are working with. They try to match the person they are with to make them comfortable, not real dignified.

They talk professionally. They had their silly moods at times.

They talk easy, answer questions, and treat me like an equal. They act sharp.

They talk to you as a human being. They treat you as a normal friend.

They are persuasive, kind, joke around with you. I like that a lot.

Most has either a Southern slang or drawl. They act official but they stay on a one to one basis with everyone.

Clean cut, friendly, out-going. I was wondering if he was going to give me a sales line or give me facts. I felt he was honest. Didn't surprise me with fancy words, not dumb or stupid either. My recruiter kept complimenting me too much. I didn't care for that, said that I was very pretty, made me uncomfortable.

f. What the Army offers is clear and explicit, and tends to fit the recruits' anticipations. There is much consistency of response about how recruiters put across the idea of enlistment, the choices available, and the kind of commitment they show. The ideas about benefits, money, the attempts to fit what the recruits want to do are offered affirmatively, but the recruits do not generally feel strongly pressed.

Recruits recognize that they are in a process of evaluating and being evaluated. Occasionally there is skepticism about what is being promised.

Medical background, law violations, drug and alcohol abuse, what you want to do. They want good physical condition, graduation from high school.

They come right out and tell you they don't promise anything, but they will do their best to get you what you want. They are looking for anybody that is determined and has will-power.

Housing, benefits, skills, and a career--I think it's an opportunity, it's great. I guess they will look at my records, school, my own information. I don't smoke, do drugs, etc.; they expect me to pass the exam.

I think it sucks. If they tell you something they should come through.

Some seem far-fetched--you can move up real quickly in rank. I've heard differently, I question moving up quickly.

g. The MEPS is seen as organized, business-like, a tiring experience, more impersonal than the small recruiting stations. It reminds some of a school, a hospital, an airport, a big place where one is treated impersonally. The recruits generally think this atmosphere is to be expected, given the need to get through the processing, and that it is typical of the organization and regimentation to be expected in the Army; but they do have specific complaints about it and think it could be improved.

It's okay. They could act a little more friendly. The guidance people are okay, but sometimes you wonder if some of the people are having a bad day or what.

It's plain, almost cold, the way they were acting at first,

like they had to do their job. Got me thinking, "If it is going to be like this I'm not sure if I want to join up."

It seems that everything takes way too long, but overall, at least the Army guidance counselors have been extremely helpful. I don't really enjoy the place. A lot of hurry up and wait.

Very long and boring. The food stinks, brown stuff, like chicken. I lost my appetite, didn't eat today. Gotta be a better way of doing this...Lot of waiting in line, waiting, period.

Too much paperwork...Get the paperwork done before they come up here.

On the plus side, the MEPS is seen as being well-organized and generally reassuring. The recruits are not surprised by it, but when they are, it is because they did not expect so many people, to see the several services in the same place, to see so many women, and to find civilians involved. The physical setting of the MEPS seems clean, bright, and rather colorful. The recruits appreciate the signage and the color coding that directs them clearly, and some of the different facilities.

h. The interviews and examinations are generally thought to be carried out in an expected manner, efficiently aimed at moving many people through the process. Most of the recruits find this friendly enough, like any "mass examination" they have been through as civilians. The doctors act pretty much like any doctors, and the counselors are praised for the care they take in working with the recruits to determine the best outcome. Some recruits find the experience a step down from the friendly attention they had received from their recruiters; and the experience of being undressed and examined along with other men is "strange."

The sergeant that conducted the interview was like a man giving out instructions. He gave me a picture of what the Army would be like.

Most were decent. Some treated us as idiots--like the hearing test. If we sat in the wrong spot, they made a big deal out of it. I figured they'd act like my recruiter, that they were all in service and all act the same. My recruiter never talked down to me.

Sometimes you had to rush, kept being sent from one room to another and going back and forth. Felt I was being played around with.

They treated me okay. It was just about what I expected, standing up in line, staying quiet, and following orders is all what I expected.

It's different than a regular physical. The part that gets me is you're in there with six other men, stripped to underwear. The worst part is checking for hemorrhoids, etc., with no clothes on in a small room with other guys.

#### C. Perspectives of Enlistees

Both focus groups and individual interviews were conducted with respondents who had completed the recruiting process and were waiting to be shipped to their first bases. As shippers, they were usually not much different from the recruits in process, as many of those recruits lacked only a final interview and swearing in to become a shipper. However, it is worth noting the effects on those shippers who recently completed the recruiting process, as well as those who had been through the process at an earlier time, so their ideas tend to be residual recollections rather than recent impressions.

##### 1. Identifying with Being in the Army

Early in the decision process it is difficult for most individuals to anticipate what it is like to be in the service. Most do not have any basis for anticipating the experience. The military, therefore, seems unnatural, foreign, and distant.

"Being in the Army. Wow. What's that all about. I didn't have a clue."

"Before I started getting serious, going in the service, might just as well have thought about living on Mars."

"You don't really know what the Army is like. It isn't like going to school. But what is it like?"

"It seems unreal. Really, it's hard to imagine what it's like. And that's a big thing. It took me a while to get over it."

College, on the other hand, is relatively easy to anticipate.

"Going to college. Yeah, it's going to school. But there's the responsibility, being on your own...A lot to handle, but you got to face it sometime. College is a good way to start."

"College is a chance to go away from home. See if you can live on your own. You can try it. If you don't like it, you can go from there."

Yet even shippers wish that they had had the opportunity for some direct experience with the military before enlisting.

"If you could go to a base close by or something. I don't know whether that's possible or not. But it would be a big help, to see what it's really like. To get a sample."

"One thing would be big help. Being able to visit or like do some of the things for a day or something. All you hear is talk. You don't actually get to see what goes on. So you really don't know if it's really for you or not. It's all talk."

"It might help to have more hands on things. Like when I was in college they had a recruiting drive for ROTC. They took us rappelling. Quick course on how to do it. Then we jumped off sixty-foot walls. Give you a feel for what the military is really like."

"At college you live away from your parents. Meet new people. Nobody is on top of you to go to school. Come home when you need clothes washed, whatever."

Family and friends were most useful in helping shippers to identify with service life.

"I have a lot of friends in the service. So when I said I might go in, no big deal. It was like natural. They had told me so much."

"Ever since I was little I wanted to know about the Army 'cause I had some uncles and things. By the time I was old enough, I felt like I knew what it was all about."

By the time of enlistment the feeling of remoteness from the Army is lessened. There is anticipation about what it is like to be in the service. Most do not have a realistic basis for anticipating the experience, but they are excited and determined to think the best of the commitment they have made. Therefore, their orientation to the future is highly optimistic, and the Army is described in glowing terms, with visions of gratifying experiences in faraway places. When finishing the sentence stem, "The Army is..." they indicate these main themes:

a. They have found a secure place.

...my home for the next four years.

...my life.

...a good place for someone who has nowhere else to go.

...helpful.

...beneficial

b. It is the promising beginning of a new life.

...a good opportunity.

...a means to an end.

...a good place to get a start.

...a great chance for the better in the future.

...a great place to start.

c. There is general affirmation.

...exciting...fun...fantastic...the best...a good organization...a wonderful experience...

The choices the enlisted group make of the Army as an animal are 74% wild, which is similar to the percentage of the group in process (71%), and less than the 80% of the high school seniors. This again suggests a little more emphasis on the ordinary aspects of Army work. However, this touch of realism does not keep the enlistees from pleasant dreams of life in the service.

## 2. Fantasies About an Idealized Life in the Future

In the fantasies the enlistees tell when they pretend they had "a dream last night about what you might be doing a year from now," they show their hopes and visions of what the Army will bring them.

Be in Germany, find a nice lady to settle down with, have some kids. I'll be happy, making the best of it, working on tanks.

I'm in a German pub, definitely very drunk with a lot of girl friends. We're on our way to ski the Alps tomorrow.

I'm in Europe meeting important people in the Army while interviewing them, since I will be in journalism. I will be on the verge of getting into overseas television. I'm very happy and happy with myself.

On active duty, working on my job. Sitting at a desk, probably in Texas. It's a whole new dramatic experience, and I feel good about it. I've accomplished something.

Be overseas, hopefully into mechanics, having a good time. Will be in Germany and there is a lot to see there. More discipline and turn into a man and am able to handle more responsibilities.

I'm in California attending the Defense Language Institute. Have a new car, lots of money saved, dating some cute, smart, rich guy...happy, thrilled actually.

I'd be over in West Germany or Korea or somewhere overseas enjoying the clubs and the food and all the great features of where I'd be and just expanding my horizons...and learning who I am in the process.

Exposure to advertising serves to reinforce this idealized picture of

service. It helps to reassure enlistees that they have made a wise choice.

"Say, get an edge on life. And have a little bit of adventure. Sounds good. Let's go!"

"They show all the fun stuff. People jumping out of planes and stuff. I can see already there is going to be more boring stuff than fun stuff. But it's going to be cool. Like the commercials show."

"Now I see something on TV. I notice it right away. That's me. Makes you feel good."

### 3. Perceptions of the Recruiting Process

With this strong orientation to the future, and having finished the recruiting process, the recruits see the process as becoming just a memory. Some deny having paid any special attention to it or having any recollections of it or its various aspects.

I don't really know what to say. I never thought about it that much. Nothing really stands out in my mind.

It was fine. Nothing stands out in my mind about it.

It was okay, there was nothing wrong with it.

The main recurrent theme is that the process is too slow. Some refer to the whole period during which they were recruited, others refer to the time taken in the recruiting station or the MEPS.

It takes too long, the whole process. This is the third time I've had to come here before I get shipped out.

Slow, it's organized, but very confusing. You tend to get impatient, a lot of paperwork.

The physical stands out because it was so long and boring.

It took so long. What stands out in my mind is the fact I waited it out. I've been going through this since December.

Not as good as it probably could be, the waiting around is a drawback. There is a two-to-three hour waiting period with nothing to do, and you have to get up at 3:00 A.M. in the morning to begin the process.

### 4. Processing Foul-ups

Well, up to two days ago, they needed information, I had to drive 600 miles to pick up paperwork that they should already have. I had to go to Marquette, then to Marshfield, then

here, in 48 hours, had to borrow gas money.

It's really boring, some of the people don't have enough patience, they lose their tempers a lot. Some at the front don't do a good job, they let the recruits down. They push you from one to another, they mess records, don't send them to the right place.

I was actually supposed to ship yesterday, but the paperwork was lost.

It is slow and seems disorganized.

## 5. Praise for Recruiters and Counselors

Despite occasional exceptions ("I had a difficult time getting in touch with my recruiter after I signed my contract"; "The first recruiter called me and he was a jerk"; "He didn't show interest and he didn't call back"; "Some of it was B.S."), the recruiting personnel are consistently described as being unusually devoted to their jobs and to the well-being of the recruits.

What stands out is that the recruiters bend over backward for you. They do extra talking on their own time, sit down and explain what will occur, and get you what you want.

He was very informative and helped out in every way he could.

I had a good sergeant. He explained everything to me I wanted to know and made me want to join more.

The way the recruiter stuck by me. He was there all the time, and seemed real concerned. He made himself available to me for any question.

My recruiter helped me out a lot. Patience, that he had. Always came to see how I was doing, kept me advised on how the process was going.

Since it was a long process, I got to know a lot of people. They were good and helpful about answering questions. What stands out is the recruiter got along with my parents.

The recruiter and the counselor were great.

In retrospect, recruits feel that forming a relationship with their recruiter was instrumental in their decision to enlist. They came not only to trust the recruiter but to see the recruiter as a role model. Interacting with the recruiter is also a way of anticipating what the military will be like. There appears to be some difficulty, however, in transitioning from the initial recruiting contact to a more trusting relationship.

"Some recruiters try to sugar coat everything. Especially at

first. When you get serious, they are more helpful. Don't try to bullshit you as much."

"I learned to really respect my recruiter. At first, you know, just figured he was out to sell me. As he got to know me, he really helped me."

"My recruiter is great. Some just give you a line. Mine, you can really count on."

"I got kind a close to the recruiter. Good guy. Made me see that the Army is just people."

"I wouldn't have joined if I hadn't felt so good about my recruiter. Just felt like he wouldn't steer me wrong."

"The (office) I went into was really laid back. I talked to one guy. Didn't try to grill me. Just explained what the Army was all about, what he had to offer."

## 6. The Recruiting Environment

The enlistees' descriptions of the recruiting stations, inside and out, and of the MEPS, are similar to those made by the pre-recruits and recruits in process, in terms of the brown and green colors, desks, computers, couches, posters, military insignia, etc. The environment is described as like "a regular office," clean and business-like. Compared to the previous groups, the enlisted group is the most positive in evaluating the recruiting environment. They see it as comfortable, welcoming, reassuring.

"Seemed like a regular office."

It was brown and green furnishing...I felt comfortable.

Like an office ready for business, not messy, and you can trust them. I felt I could trust the people I talked to. It was furnished so you can be comfortable...(The MEPS) was colorful, bright, comfortable...makes you feel more relaxed, more like home.

It was pretty neat, they had a parachute hanging from the ceiling, model helicopters, tanks, etc. at Crystal Lake. I was surprised to see how nice it was.

It was relaxed. I don't remember the colors, it was comfortable...It was nice. They have a racial variety and they joked around together like friends. It was good to see everyone get along.

There was some qualification about the MEPS as being more like a hospital, colder in atmosphere (literally, when being undressed). The physical examination bothers people who are unaccustomed to such a thorough one, and the doctors are the most

criticized personnel at the MEPS.

Some made you feel like a number, like crap. It was 50/50, usually the older doctors were the ones that weren't as cool as the younger ones.

They were strict, no talking, walking in a straight line, and shuffling papers. It was what I expected.

I really don't like physicals, I just didn't like the physical, can't say why. I don't like people poking and prodding at my body.

A couple of people on the physical were snappy and smart alecks, like arrogant types.

I thought they were rude to us, they were irritable, not what I expected.

But respondents appreciated the facilities.

The place itself is nice. There are things you can do, TV, cafeteria, read.

It's been a lot better than I expected. I didn't expect lounges, hotels, and game rooms.

#### 7. Annoying Continuation of Mailings

Many enlistees are sensitive to the fact that they still receive mailings. Although this is a minor thing in itself, it makes them wonder about their importance to the military. They believe that the services should know that they are beyond this stage. This concern is expressed as part of a lingering doubt as to whether they have really made the right decision.

"I got something from the Navy yesterday. Don't even open it. It's weird though. Makes you wonder if it's all just junk. I'll probably have a stack waiting for me on my first leave."

"They still send you stuff. Try to pull strings, get you to change. Even after you are really into it."

"It (mail) makes you think. Do they really even care who I am? You shut it out, but it makes you wonder."

"They send you the same crap they send a high school junior. Maybe you are just meat to them."

#### 8. Enlistees Generally Satisfied and Optimistic

The enlistees feel committed to an important decision, and tend to discount the criticisms they do make. They say that everywhere one finds people who are rude or who mess up, and that having to wait is to be expected when many people are going through a process. They prefer to emphasize the positive and to think

about the advantages of joining the Army. When asked how Army experience might help them after they leave the service, or how it might not help, they commonly are unable to come up with any drawbacks. Those who do offer the following ideas about the potential negatives of having been in service:

- a. One might be injured, whether through war or some hazard of training.
- b. There are people who have negative attitudes toward veterans, or who look down on the military.
- c. It could be a waste of time if one were not happy or getting what is wanted out of it.
- d. One might pick up undesirable characteristics in the Army such as becoming too aggressive or too firm, or speak too loudly or harshly, or become more close-minded.
- e. Trouble-makers might get thrown out.
- f. One might become too dependent, unused to paying one's own way.
- g. One will be older then, perhaps losing seniority, finding it harder to start something new.

On the plus side, the advantages of having been in service are substantial and seem more likely.

- a. Being trained, it will be easier to get employment. Employers will feel one is more responsible and worthy of respect.
- b. It will be easier to get schooling.
- c. One's financial situation will be better.
- d. The veteran will be more experienced, knowledgeable, worldly, mature.
- e. One will gain discipline, which is interpreted in several ways: good work habits, neatness, orderliness, diligence, persistence, self-reliance, self-confidence, decisiveness, goal-orientation, organizational skills. ("It will help me arrange my closet and my life.")

In general, the recruiting process provides support for these beliefs, by giving information about the training and benefits to be gained, and by offering an office version of Army personnel at work. The process can seem slow, bureaucratic, and humdrum, but it reassures by combining the ordinary qualities of modest offices with the role models of recruiters and counselors, who generally seem humane as well as being soldiers who are disciplined in dress and manner.

#### D. The Post-Recruitment Nonenlistees

Interviews were held with 10 people who had been through the recruitment process and had decided against enlisting. As a group, these respondents seem to

hold the Army in high esteem and had a genuine interest in enlisting. However, they had a specific placement interest that was not available at the time, and they were not willing to accept another position. A couple were sufficiently uncertain of what they wanted to do that they were not able to come to a decision in the course of the recruiting process.

#### 1. Awareness of Army Benefits

Like most other respondents, the nonenlistees are familiar with the Army's advertising and literature. They came to consider the Army through the usual channels of having a family member in service or being contacted by a recruiter. In their minds, the Army offers benefits in money, training, and personal development. They may think it is "a great place to start," "a good opportunity," and "an all right institution."

#### 2. A Disaffected Group

Having decided against enlisting, the group expresses more qualification and resentment than the other groups. They do not enthuse the way the enlistees do. They qualify the value of the Army by saying the Army is "...a good career for someone who wants the Army and likes the field the Army trains him for" or "...okay for some people." Or they describe the Army in neutral terms: "...a crucial part of the defense of the nation" or "...a military organization." Their Vitality Index (the percentage of wild animals chosen) falls dramatically to 41%, because their image of the Army has become more dominated by feelings about its bureaucratic and stubborn side.

#### 3. The Recruiting Environment

The nonenlistees' descriptions of the recruiting stations and the MEPS are similar to those made by the other groups. The stations are small, adequate, or comfortable places with posters and patriotic symbols, brown and green colors, and computers. The MEPS are more like a hospital, school, or airport, but suited to the purpose.

One man wondered why the recruitment technology could not have saved him from going through it all: "It seems strange to me. A recruiter with all the technology of today should know what is open and available and not have one go through the whole MEPS to find out it is not available."

#### 4. Resentment of Recruiters

Like others who have gone through the recruiting process, the nonenlistees see such assets of the recruiters as being seriously devoted to their work, and as neat and well-groomed representatives of the Army. However, they also see them more critically as giving lip service to the advertising claims of helping recruits to "Be All That You Can Be." As a result, they are snide in their descriptions.

The first one has a small beer belly, 6'3", moustache, brown hair; the second, black hair, medium build. They are jerks.

Very sharply dressed; uniform--neat, clean. Everybody's next door neighbor; familiar, like a used car salesman. I met three to four different ones and what they all said, it was a patterned story.

They were very young, little guys fresh out of high school. They were real nice, real friendly. But the man in charge was a fast talker. He reminded me of a real con man.

Like they are so friendly, nothing bothers them, they are so good. He talks like he is hip, younger, young, they want to fit in. They seem like they are lying to your face, over-friendly.

The nonenlistees focus especially on the pressure brought to bear to accept a position they are uncertain about or do not want, which contradicts all the emphasis on helping people to get what they want. In a few instances, they describe the friendly recruiter as becoming not so nice when frustrated.

They were very polite and friendly to the people going into the Army. He was nice and understanding, but when he found out I wasn't sure about going in he was like, "I wasted all this time on you" and "I don't understand why you're doing this to me."

They told me I could have my location, job, and money in my contract, but when I got down there they said nothing could be guaranteed, it could all be changed. I didn't like that. Also, when I said I wasn't going to join because I didn't like the jobs offered, he pressured me. "If I knew you were going to pull this shit I wouldn't have brought you down here." He gave me seven minutes to decide and started tearing me apart and insulting me about my weight and that I would turn into a blimp.

V. APPENDIX

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endix A. Interviewers' Guide - Phase 1

IAL RESEARCH, INC.  
Sheridan Road  
nston, IL 60202

Study #901/01      October, 1989

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

TIME BEGUN \_\_\_\_\_ ENDED \_\_\_\_\_

are doing a study of high school seniors' ideas and plans about careers, training, schooling, and so on. The questions we ask have no right or wrong answers, we just want to know your thinking about your future plans.

How would you describe yourself as a person? What are the special things you like and like doing?

How do you think you are like your friends, and how are you different?

What are your plans for the first year after graduation?

How definite are your plans? What might happen to change them?

How did you come to decide to do that? What are some of the reasons you thought in  
or of doing that, and what you thought was against it?

What have you done about looking into and planning for that? How have you gone about it  
so far?

What else do you plan to do about it, and when?

How does your family afeel about what you plan to do after you finish high school? What  
plans do they want you to make?

How do you handle the situation when your ideas are different from your family's?

What are your closest friends planning to do after high school? What do they think of your plans?

In what ways are the guidance counselors at school helpful? In what ways not helpful? You talked with them about your plans? What have they said, and what did you think of it?

Now I'd like you to pretend you had a dream last night about what you might be doing a from now. Make up a story about that. Tell me where you are. What are you doing? Is happening to you? How do you feel about that?

Now I am going to read you the beginnings of some sentences. I would like you to finish these sentences with a few words, in any way that comes to mind. Let's do this quickly. (WRITE IN EVERYTHING SAID)

ishing high school is \_\_\_\_\_

I think about next year, I \_\_\_\_\_

ple who go to trade schools are \_\_\_\_\_

ould like to learn \_\_\_\_\_

ple who go to college are \_\_\_\_\_

ple who go into military service are \_\_\_\_\_

ple who travel for months are \_\_\_\_\_

People who go right to work are \_\_\_\_\_

Boys who get married right out of high school \_\_\_\_\_

Girls who get married at graduation \_\_\_\_\_

Army recruitment mailings are \_\_\_\_\_

Movies seem to say the Army is \_\_\_\_\_

TV shows the Army as \_\_\_\_\_

Ads for the Army on TV \_\_\_\_\_

The movies I remember best about the Army are \_\_\_\_\_

14. Did you receive a mailing from the Army last year or this year? Tell me what you remember about it. What did you think of it?

15. Did your family see the mailing? What did they think about it? What was said about it?

16. What have you heard from people who have served or are serving in the Army, about what it is like?

17. (SHOW PICTURE) Please look at this picture, and make up a story about it. Tell me what you think is going on, and how it is going to turn out.

18. (SHOW ARMY MAILER) What does the Army offer to these people? Why do you think they enlisted? What are people in the Army like? How do they compare with the people shown here?

19. What do you think about enlisting yourself in the Army? What do you think you would get from two years in the service? From four years? From the Army as a career?

20. What would your friends think if you enlisted?

21. What would your family think if you enlisted? Why do you think they would feel that  
y?

22. From everything you have heard and seen about the Army, tell me what you would expect  
each of these items about Army recruitment to be like. Just imagine what it would be like,  
if you haven't really been there.

a. What does an Army recruiting station look like? What first impression comes to your  
mind?

b. What kind of neighborhood is the station in? What kind of people live there?

c. What does it say on the outside of the recruiting station? What kind of signs and  
pictures are there?

d. What do you imagine the recruiting station is like inside? What feeling do you get from  
it?

e. Describe how you think it is probably furnished? What colors are used? Why do you  
think that?

What kinds of sounds and noises do you hear when you go inside?

5. How does it smell? Why do you think so?

h. What might the recruiters look like? Have you met any recruiters? If so, where, and what did you think of them?

i. How do the recruiters talk? How do they act?

j. How do they put across the idea of enlisting in the Army?

k. What kinds of choices do they offer?

1. What kinds of promises or commitments do they make?

m. What would they want to know about you? How do you think they would learn that? What qualifications would they be looking for?

23. If you were to think of the Army as an animal, which of these animals would it be most like? Pick two animals from the list that come closest to fitting your impressions of the Army? (CIRCLE TWO)

Tiger

Horse

Elephant

Cat

Mule

Cow

Bear

Dog

Lion

Squirrel

Wolf

Bull

Why did you pick those two--what comes to mind about them and about the Army?

Thank you for your cooperation.

Appendix B. Interviewers' Guide - Phases 2-3

SOCIAL RESEARCH, INC.  
345 Sheridan Road  
Evanston, IL 60202

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

Study #901/01 March, 1990

TIME BEGUN \_\_\_\_\_ ENDED \_\_\_\_\_

We're conducting a study of the way people see the recruitment process.

We are interested in what your experience has been like from when you began to enlist. No information from the interviews is personally identified when the report is prepared. In other words, nothing discussed here goes into any person's record. There are no right or wrong answers, we just want to see how people feel at this point in the recruitment process.

1. How did you come to apply to the Army? What started you thinking about doing that?

2. What did your family and friends think about the idea of your enlisting?

3. What do you think about the recruitment process? What stands out in your mind about it?

4. What did you expect from the advertising you have seen about the Army? How is it different from your expectations? Tell me more about that.

5. How is the recruiting most like what you expected?

6. How is it turning out for you? What are you glad about, what are you not so glad about?

7. Now, I'd like you to pretend you had a dream last night about what you might be doing a year from now. Make up a story about that. Tell me where you are. What are you doing? What is happening to you? How do you feel about that?

8. I'm going to start some sentences, and would like you to finish these them for me. Just say anything that comes to mind.

When I think about next year, I \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to learn \_\_\_\_\_

People who go right to college are \_\_\_\_\_

People who go right into military service are \_\_\_\_\_

People who travel for months are \_\_\_\_\_

People who go right to work are \_\_\_\_\_

Guys who get married right out of high school \_\_\_\_\_

Army recruitment is \_\_\_\_\_

The Army promises \_\_\_\_\_

My mother thinks \_\_\_\_\_

My father knows \_\_\_\_\_

The Army is \_\_\_\_\_

9. What have you heard from people who have served or are serving in the Army, about what it is like?

10. (SHOW PICTURE) Please look at this picture, and make up a story about it. Tell me what you think is going on, and how it is going to turn out.

11. What do you think you would get from two years in the service? From four years? From the Army as a career?

12. From your experience, tell what you find each of these items about the Army recruitment to be like.

a. What does an Army recruiting station look like? What first impression comes to your mind?

b. What kind of neighborhood is the station in? What kind of people live there?

c. What does it say on the outside of the recruiting station? What kind of signs and pictures are there?

d. What is the recruiting station like inside? What feeling do you get from it?

e. Describe how it is furnished? What colors are used? Why do you think that?

f. What kinds of sounds and noises do you hear when you go inside?

g. How does it smell? Why do you think so?

h. What do the recruiters look like? What did you think of them?

i. How do the recruiters talk? How do they act?

j. How do they put across the idea of enlisting in the Army?

k. What kinds of choices do they offer?

l. What kinds of promises or commitments do they make? What do you think of that?

m. What do they want to know about you? How do you think they would learn that? What qualifications are they looking for?

13. What about your experience at the MEPS? What do you think of the place, in general?

14. How does the MEPS fit your idea of what the Army is like? What about it surprised you?

15. What feelings did you get from the furnishings, colors, the way the place is fixed up?

16. How did they treat you during the examinations and interviews? Was it like what you expected or not? In what ways?

17. Where do you stand now, in this process? What's been decided? What do you think will happen? What are you looking forward to?

18. This is something a little different. If you were to think of the Army as an animal, which of these animals would it be most like? Pick two animals from the list that come closest to fitting your impressions of the Army? (CIRCLE TWO)

Tiger

Horse

Elephant

Cat

Mule

Cow

Bear

Dog

Lion

Squirrel

Wolf

Bull

Why did you pick those two--what comes to mind about them and about the Army?

19. If you are accepted (or have been), which of the following career plans do you think you will try for after your term of enlistment? (FOR OTHERS, ASK:) If not going into the service, which of the following career plans do you think you will try for>

Take a Job

Re-Enlist in Army

College

Trade School

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Why?

20. How might Army experience help with what you (or someone) does after they leave the service?

21. How might it interfere or not help with what one does later?

22. What else is there about the recruitment process that we haven't talked about?

---

#### SOCIAL DATA

Circle

1. Age \_\_\_\_ 2. Sex \_\_\_\_ 3. Marital Status \_\_\_\_ 4. Ethnicity: Hispanic Black White Oriental

5. Circle highest grade of education 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16

6 Father's occupation: \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Mother's occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

8. Circle estimate of family annual income: -1 up to \$14,999

-2 \$15,000 to 24,999

9. Circle recruit status: -3 \$25,000 to 34,999

-1 In process

-4 \$35,000 to 44,999

-2 Enlisted

-5 \$45,000 to 54,999

-3 Not enlisted

-6 \$55,000 plus

### Appendix C. Thematic Pictures

The following six pictures were used in the interviews to elicit story-telling about my scenes. One picture was used with each interview, the six being rotated randomly through both forms of the interview.





